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A
FACE IN A CROWD.
AND OTHER STORIES.

A
FACE IN A CROWD

And Other Stories,

BY
ELLA ADELAIDE HARPER.

"RUELLA LENNOX."

NEW YORK:
PRIVATELY PRINTED

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1893.

THIS collection of stories, written by
ELLA ADELAIDE HARPER, and which have
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By her

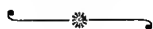
MOTHER.

March, 1893.

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A FACE IN A CROWD.



“DOUGLAS, old boy, I wonder if you will think me very inquisitive if I ask you a question?”

“What is it, Harry?” returned his friend, absently.

“What were you brooding over at the *musical* this evening? Miss Blanche spoke to you twice and you did not reply. That is unlike you, old fellow.” The tone was affectionate, if slightly reproving. “Yours seemed——

“‘The careless stillness of a thinking mind
Self-occupied; to which all outward things
Are like an idle matter.’”

“Did Miss Carrington speak to me and receive no reply?” exclaimed Douglas Lester, while a sensitive flush swept over his dark cheek. “She must have thought me sadly discourteous.”

“My dear fellow, she did not think that. She merely stole a little glance at you, and then smiled in a very fetching and mischievous manner. Later in the evening she asked me, ‘Is Mr. Lester in love at last? His thoughts are far from us.’”

Douglas’ cheek flushed, his lips parted in a half

smile. His friend stared at him for a moment, then exclaimed in tones of surprise :

“ Old fellow, you are not ? Does that explain your moodiness of late, and your evident wish to sit alone and think ? ”

“ My inquisitive friend ! ” with a little smile. “ I suppose I may as well take you into my confidence. I am in love—very deeply in love.”

“ Douglas ! ” in a half incredulous tone. “ And the lady—do I know her ? ”

“ You do not, Harry ; in fact, I do not know her myself—it was a face in a crowd.”

His friend was speechless with amazement.

“ With a face in a crowd,” repeated Douglas in a tender and subdued tone.

At that his friend cried :

“ It is just like you, Douglas ! ”

“ Do you think so ? ”

“ Yes, like you, and yet unlike you, too. Tell me all about it.”

The voice was sympathetic. Harry listened while his friend narrated the circumstance.

“ About a month ago,” said Douglas Lester, with a luminous expression in his dark eyes, “ I attended a concert. The audience was a large and fashionable one. I was seated in a box with a party of friends. Madame Iralto was rendering very delightfully ‘ The Maid of Dundee,’ when my attention was attracted by a young girl in the

audience. Her rapt attention, the lovable tenderness of the face, won and charmed me. Astonishingly fair, sunny clustering hair, very dark eyes and eyebrows of the same hue—in fact, a face so true and so tender that I was completely captivated. The little song had touched her; the trustful eyes grew pathetic, but soon resumed their happy, childlike expression. She looked a girl of about eighteen, perhaps, but”—his voice deepened and became full of intense longing—“I would give the world to meet her again!”

“And you did not learn her name?”

“I endeavored to in as unobtrusive a manner as possible; no one seemed to know. She was accompanied by an elderly gentleman and an intelligent looking young lady; they impressed me as people of extreme refinement. Others were attracted by the young girl’s beauty. Mrs. Dunsbie tapped me on the arm with her fan. ‘Mr. Lester,’ she said, ‘have you noticed the young lady in the sixth row?’ I bowed in assent. ‘She is rather an unusual type, I think; it does my old eyes good to look upon such an innocent, unworldly face. I wonder who she is?’ Since that evening I have haunted concerts, the opera, the theatre, but without success. As I turned to steal another glance at her sweet face after Mrs. Dunsbie’s remark, I saw with regret that

the party had vanished ; shortly after, the concert drew to a close."

"My friend, the world is a big place, and this city is large. Many strangers come and go. Perhaps she was visiting the city."

"I am inclined to think that such is the case," replied Lester, with a sigh, "for a girl with such a remarkable face could not long remain unknown, even in such a large city as this."

"Well, I should label the incident 'A face in a crowd,' put it away and forget all about it. In all probability you will never meet her again, or if you do, as Mrs. Somebody."

A wistful and very sad expression crossed Douglas Lester's face.

"I cannot forget. She is the one woman in all this world to me."

Harry's face expressed sympathy as well as pity. Stretching out his hand, he grasped the other's arm and gave it an emphatic little shake.

"Don't waste your life in dreaming, old boy ; it won't mend matters," he said cheerily.

" ' Why should we vex true love's true heart,
Going apart ? ' "

said Douglas, dreamily.

His friend could do nothing but look at him ; at length he said :

"I regret very much that this has happened to

you, Douglas, old man. You do not take the matter lightly, I see ; it fills all your thoughts."

"I do not regret having met her," returned his friend, in a voice full of tenderness. "My life is better for it ; the memory of her innocent face will never leave me."

"Nonsense !" cried his friend, half incredulously. "Do not waste your affections upon a shadow, when there are so many lovely girls——"

His friend interrupted him.

"They are shadows," he said. "I will be true to 'the love that makes me thrice a man.'" And that ended the conversation.

In course of time Harry Gordon arrived at the conclusion that his friend had been deeply impressed by the meeting ; if it had saddened him it had undoubtedly improved him ; he was softened ; he led a fuller and richer life than before. It was rather pathetic to watch him in a crowd, however ; his restless dark eyes might be seen glancing from face to face, eager, longing, wistful.

"Needs must it have been a sore heart-wasting," quoted Harry to himself one evening, and he felt saddened, and longed to cheer his friend, there was such sad unrest in the fine eyes.

One evening Harry returned from a gay and delightful evening with Miss Blanche and her sister. He entered the sitting-room ; it was peace-

ful and still ; Douglas was stretched upon the sofa, sound asleep. As Harry surveyed his friend his blue eyes softened.

"What a fine, even noble, face the fellow has !" mused he. "What a resolute chin and firm lips !"

And yet there was a want expressed in that face, a wistfulness that his friend was grieved to read there. It was a sad face, he thought ; the square brow was particularly frank and open, a strong face, full of latent strength and will power ; it had won him many friends, and yet the one friend whose sweet society he most longed for must remain a stranger.

Harry sighed, and his friend opened his dark eyes. With a smile he stretched himself sleepily, and then sprang up.

"I have been asleep—a dreamless sleep. I believe I was very tired," he said.

"You are over-worked ; you need a rest," returned his friend. "But, Douglas, you should have been with me this evening. Miss Agnes asked for you."

"That was kind of her," replied the young man, a little indifferently.

"Douglas," speaking earnestly, "she is a charming girl, almost as charming as her sister Blanche."

"She is attractive," said Lester, readily.

A pause ensued. At length a profound sigh from Douglas Lester caused his friend to exclaim :

"Old fellow, I have half a mind to tell you of a little incident that occurred to-day." He paused, and then said, "You know the Grantleys sailed for Europe this afternoon ?

Douglas nodded, still indifferently.

"I was standing on the wharf," continued Harry, "and the vessel was just preparing to leave us, when my eye fell upon a young girl standing near the steamer's railing—very fair, with great, innocent dark eyes."

Douglas started, and a vivid flush swept over his dark cheek ; his brown eyes were fixed eagerly, imploringly on his friend, and that friend continued :

"I must admit that the face was a most unusual and lovable one. Then I glanced at her companion—rather reserved looking—she wore glasses, I noticed."

"Harry," cried his friend, "you have seen her—the girl for whom I am wearing my heart out !"

"A gentleman with snowy hair completed the group. So, old man, you need not search for her on this side of the water. Perhaps"—teasingly—"she may capture the heart of an English noble."

But Lester did not seem to hear him ; he was

lost in thought ; at length he exclaimed impulsively :

“ You said a few months ago, Harry, that I needed rest, and you are right. I am possessed by a desire to cross the Atlantic. I have half a mind to gratify the wish ! ”

His friend stared at him, then arose and paced the room ; his face was imperturbable. At length he paused beside Lester’s chair, and said gravely :

“ Are you in earnest, old fellow ? ”

“ In dead earnest,” replied the young man. “ I can arrange to go very easily just now.”

“ When will you sail ? ”

“ In about two weeks’ time. I cannot arrange to leave sooner.”

“ Well, may good luck and success attend you ! Your perseverance and patience certainly deserves some reward,” speaking impulsively.

“ Something tells me we shall surely meet,” replied Lester, in a confident tone. “ I feel cheered and encouraged. I must not despond, for you know ‘ Faint heart ne’er won fair ladye.’ ” A smile lit his handsome face. “ ‘ Fair ladye,’ ” he repeated—“ She deserves the title, and how delightfully simple, and how unconscious of her loveliness, she is ! ”

“ I can easily understand how that flower-like, childish face won your heart,” returned the other ;

"just as Blanche's vivacity and wit won mine, I suppose," meditatively.

"A merely lovely face could not charm me," replied Douglas; "there was a deal of character in that white brow. We must—we shall—meet again," speaking restlessly.

"I sincerely hope so. You will wear your life out fretting for her."

" 'There is a comfort in the strength of love,
'Twill make a thing endurable, that else
Would upset the brain or break the heart.' "

quoted Lester, softly and thoughtfully.

His friend smiled at him.

"You are desperately in love," he said.

Douglas did not deny it—he returned the smile.

In fact, a change came over him; he grew light-hearted; he was often heard humming old songs to himself. His friend did not share his hopefulness; he was inclined to think that Lester might keep up the search for a year or more in vain, and gradually outlive the fancy. Time can accomplish wonders, and he thought it merely a question of time. The restless, unsatisfied longing would die away, he would become reconciled, and forget, not entirely, perhaps; Harry knew the depth of his friend's nature too well to hope that. In a word, Harry regarded the whole affair as transient, painful at the time, but sure to be outlived.

“For how,” mused he, “could a face, however lovely, impress itself indelibly in only a few moments? Time must efface it.”

“And so you intend to run away from us all, Mr. Lester,” remarked a gay belle a few evenings later, as the young man approached and requested the pleasure of a waltz.

“Yes,” remarked Harry, who stood in the group, “he wants a change, he says.”

“Of society?” queried she, archly, adding in a slightly piqued tone, “you are not tired of us, I hope. Do not lose your heart while you are away, I beg of you.”

Douglas Lester smiled, and the young lady was remarkably silent during the entire waltz. She could not read the bright look that had so suddenly illumined his grave face; it puzzled her; it was a new phase of his character.

One bright morning in early springtime Harry Gordon, after grasping his friend’s hand and wishing him “God speed,” watched the stately vessel move slowly off, bound for foreign shores. The trip across was not an eventful one. Douglas was a capital sailor, and spent most of the time on deck contemplating sky and sea.

Once on dry land, the young man became a most restless traveller. He remained in England for a time, crossed the channel to France, wandered through that sunny, beautiful country, and

then visited Switzerland. Italy charmed him ; he recalled Roger's words :

"The day we come to a place which we have long heard and read of, and in Italy we do so continually, it is an era in our lives ; and from that moment the very name calls up a picture. How delightfully too does the knowledge flow in upon us, and how fast."

Douglas Lester's was a mind eminently fitted to appreciate the charms of the Old World, but he had never once forgot a certain golden-crowned head whose bright locks contrasted so piquantly with a pair of soft, dark eyes.

And the weeks slipped away, and Harry Gordon wondered at his friend's prolonged absence, when he received the following letter from him :

"DEAR HARRY : I started for Venice two days ago, deciding to remain there a short time, and then fix a date for returning to America. The fact is, my friend, I was not a little disheartened ; I at last realized what a hopeless search mine was, in quest of a girl whose name I did not know.

"Last evening, tempted by the extreme beauty of the night, I stepped into a gondola and started, with a small party, for the Square of St. Marks'. The Grand Canal was alive with gondolas ; the music from a guitar or mandolin might be heard from some, sweet laughter floated to my ears. The scene was one of witching beauty ; the moon

looked down complacently upon the Bride of the Waters, but I was strangely, unutterably sad. I was beginning to fear I should never again look upon the girl who so entirely filled my thoughts. The thought was torture to me. All seemed festive, all were happy, save myself.

“I was bitter, and the very beauty of my surroundings jarred upon me. Gondola after gondola floated past me, presenting an animated appearance filled with gay parties and lit with colored lamps. At length my eye fell casually upon a gondola that came gliding toward me, then, let me tell you, my attention was chained ! Harry, I never before knew what gymnastics hearts are capable of ; mine gave a tremendous leap and then seemed to stand quite still, for that black-hued gondola held the very girl I was longing to behold. The swinging lamp shed its light full upon her fair young face—such an expressive, dreamy little face, lit by a half smile. Venice had thrown a spell over her !

“Smoothly, silently, nearer and nearer floated the gondola. I could almost have touched her little hand. I think my earnest, intense gaze must have attracted her ; she turned to me ; our eyes met—I could not have looked away from her had my life depended upon it. What a lovely, half-wondering glance she gave me ! Another moment and she was carried on, out of my sight.

“And then I turned and opened my mouth to order the gondolier to turn about and follow, but I checked myself just in time. What could I say? And our party were bound for the Square of St. Mark's. Perhaps, after all, she might return there with her friends. Everyone promenaded there; I would watch for her.

“I shall never forget that evening, what a difference the few short hours had made! I realized that the city held my loved one. I was filled with the keenest, sweetest anticipation. We would meet again. How dazzlingly bright the world looked to me! Such moments are worth a few weeks of pain. I realized forcibly what a poor, restless fellow I had been. I paced up and down, I waited, I watched; she did not come.

“It was late when I left the Square. As we were about to disembark at the hotel, another party floated up; with a heart throb that was well-nigh painful, I again beheld the girl whose truthful, tender face had won my heart. The party were stopping at the very hotel at which I located myself. I confess that I sat by my window until the moon went down. I did not catch a glimpse of one of the little party this morning, but found my way to the office. There the clerk informed me that the Woodlys, an American party, had left early this morning for Florence. I shall follow them, and will finish this letter there.

"The girl is a 'Will o' the wisp,' Harry—or at least I have followed the wrong party. I had just registered my name at the hotel in Florence, on the very same page with the Woodlys, and had turned away with a feeling of complete satisfaction when an elderly gentleman and two young ladies passed me ; a friend accosted him.

"'Hallo, Woodly !' he cried, and after the first surprised glance at them I bit my lip with annoyance as I recognized the party who had occupied the gondola with me on that eventful evening. It did not occur to me that there might be more than one family of Americans at the hotel in Venice.

"I am in Venice once again, and was informed by the clerk that the other American party left shortly after I did, and strangely enough, did not ask to have their letters forwarded to any particular city. The party consists of Mr. and Miss Ward, of our city, and Miss Genevieve Arlington, of Baltimore.

"'Into my life dipped, out of my life slipped.' Rest assured I shall search until I have found her. I am roused, I am piqued—and yes, I confess it, I am very deeply in love."

The letter closed with messages for some of his old friends. Lester sealed it, and then lost himself in a fit of abstraction. At length he sprang to his feet and commenced pacing the

floor, with a half smile and a most reckless sparkle in his fine eyes. He left Venice, and for a month traveled most impatiently from place to place, but did not once chance to meet again the young girl who had so unconsciously attracted him.

Very much disheartened, he listlessly tore open an envelope containing a letter from his friend Gordon.

"Come home, old fellow. What are you roaming around Europe for? Miss Ward and Miss Arlington are in town; a friend kindly introduced me, and I have had several pleasant chats with the young lady from Baltimore. She intends to return home very shortly, although her aunt is anxious for her to remain with them much longer. I asked Miss Arlington if she met many Americans in Venice, and told her I had a friend who recently visited the 'floating city.' So while you are roaming from place to place, I find it agreeable to remain at home; it varies my evenings very delightfully to spend them at the Wards' pleasant mansion. You have no idea how charmingly Miss Arlington converses. I should have written you a few days earlier, but could not actually find time. Come home, Douglas; seriously, she is just the girl for you. I am glad you—that is—I—have found her for you."

In a surprisingly short time Lester was again pacing the deck of an ocean steamer. He was

sadly impatient. It seemed to him the voyage was an exceedingly long one. His sojourn in foreign lands had improved him, for all he had wandered about so restlessly. In capital health and fine spirits he grasped Harry Gordon's outstretched hand.

"Has Miss Arlington returned to Baltimore?" he questioned most eagerly.

"She is still in the city."

Douglas Lester had not been very long in America before he managed to become acquainted with the young girl whose sweet face had so completely won him. He went often to the Wards, and Genevieve soon learned to regard him as a pleasant friend. Indeed, his cordial manner soon melted away the barrier of reserve and formality that is apt to exist between newly made friends. The girl could listen as well as converse, and she soon found herself looking forward with interest to a chat with Douglas.

As for Lester? He was delightfully happy; the sound of Genevieve's soft voice, the glance from her frank, childish eyes, remained with him long after he had left her.

They were listening to a song rendered by Miss Ward one evening; the melody was sweet and very plaintive. Douglas stole a glance at the girl at his side; her eyes wore just the expression with which she had listened to that song long

ago at the concert, when first he had noticed her—dreamy and rather wistful. His heart gave a glad throb; what a fortunate fellow he was! The face in the crowd was now the face of his friend—his dear friend—his sweetheart! He sighed for very happiness. Miss Arlington glanced at him, and then a half arch smile dimpled her cheeks and stole into her eyes.

“What are you laughing at?” questioned the young man, smiling in spite of himself. “Because I sighed?”

“Yes—at the compliment paid to Mary’s singing,” she replied.

“Pardon me, I was not thinking of the song. My thoughts had travelled back to a certain evening at a concert.” He paused, and then said, “Sing for me.”

“Will you sigh?” she asked playfully, raising her beautiful eyes to his face in a simple fashion.

“Do you think you could make me sigh, Genevieve?” he questioned in hurried, ardent tones.

The young girl looked bewildered—he had called her Genevieve. Noticing the shy constraint that crept over her, Lester changed his tones and said lightly,—

“Did you ever hear of a happy sigh? But listen, your friend is singing ‘Robin Adair,’ and she sings it well, too.”

“What’s this dull town to me?
Robin’s not here.”

"And so," pursued Lester, softly, "she missed Robin ; she felt as one does when they dance after the music has ceased ; the town was dull without her Robin. I wonder if I could imagine the sensation !"

The gentle voice thrilled Genevieve ; she listened with a half tremulous smile, feeling intensely happy, and yet somehow relieved when Mary Ward left the piano and joined them.

"Won't you sing for us, Mr. Lester ?" asked that young lady.

"I should like to listen to Miss Arlington," he said.

"But no, please," exclaimed Genevieve.

"What shall I sing then ?"

"Anything, we do not know your repertoire," said Mary Ward.

He seated himself at the piano, then struck a few chords, and commenced Mendelssohn's "Greeting." The melody suited his full rich voice ; he sang with expression—the two girls were pleased with the song.

"Ends rather sadly," remarked Lester, shaking his handsome head. "Let me sing something more hopeful."

A Scotch ballad echoed through the rooms. He certainly sang well and tenderly, but then he liked his audience. I think he put his heart in his singing.

Other friends came in. Genevieve found Douglas Lester again at her side.

"So you like my 'Greeting ?'" he observed, drawing his chair near her.

"Very much," opening her fan. A bracelet of linked coins slipped from her white arm to the floor. Douglas stooped for it.

"What a very odd bracelet," he remarked.

"Foreign coins ; most of them bear very ancient dates" she replied.

He examined it and then said "Permit me," and bending toward her, clasped the ornament around her pretty wrist. He had not thought such a little thing could make his heart beat so tumultuously ; he was unusually clumsy in adjusting it, but finally succeeded.

He sat back in his chair with an unwonted flush upon his cheek, and regarded the girl half wistfully. Her sweet eyes were downcast ; she fingered her bracelet and looked shy. Lester's heart beat thick and fast ; they were joined by others, and all too soon the evening drew to a close.

"She does not hate me," mused Lester. "I wonder if I could teach her to love me ! I must ask her—soon."

Miss Ward had many friends. It was her custom to remain at home to receive them one evening of each week. Someone was singing as

Douglas Lester entered the spacious parlors, one cold winter night. As usual, his eyes sought the room for Genevieve ; but he did not see her, and so wandered about, and at length again approached Miss Ward. After a few remarks, he said,—

“ Miss Arlington is not here, I perceive.”

“ No—Genevieve attends Mrs. Fane’s *musicale* this evening.”

Lester drew a long breath of relief ; then she had not returned suddenly to Baltimore, as he had half feared. But how desolate and lonely he felt without her !

“ Where is all the joy and mirth ? ” quoted he to himself. What a bleak, stern world it would be without Genevieve to make sunshine for him ! There was a comfort in being near her ; it was restful only to glance at her. And then he was filled with a sudden, unutterable longing to know his fate ; he could not endure the suspense—he must know her answer.

He was requested to sing. He sang well that evening ; when he had finished there was a little rustle and stir in the hall, and Genevieve Arlington entered, accompanied by a few friends. Douglas thought he had never before seen her looking half so lovely or desirable. Her frock of black lace was relieved by a loose bunch of “ Marechal Neil ” roses. Lester soon joined the little group

that had flocked about her. At length, he said,—

“Miss Arlington, I think your cousin wishes to attract your attention ; perhaps she desires to speak to you. Shall we join her ? ”

Genevieve took the proffered arm ; they crossed the room.

“I want a song from one of you,” said Miss Ward, in her pleasant fashion.

Genevieve glanced up at Lester and smiled.

“Sing for us,” she said.

“Mr. Lester favored us a few moments ago,” said their hostess, “and now it is your turn, Genevieve.”

Lester felt the small hand resting upon his arm tremble, but after a moment’s hesitation, Genevieve said simply,—

“And what shall it be, Mary ? Shall I sing Abt’s ‘ Night ? ’ ”

“Yes—it suits your voice, dear, and the refrain, Ave Maria, is so soothingly sweet. I will accompany you.”

But Douglas interfered.

“Let me accompany Miss Arlington,” he urged. “I am familiar with the song.”

He knew what a comfort a sympathetic accompaniment is. Genevieve was led to the piano, the music was found, Douglas played the opening chords and the song began.

“The day’s long tumult dies away,
The twilight peace is bringing.”

Miss Arlington sang with feeling ; she possessed a true, pure voice that somehow found its way to the hearts of those listening, and at the end of the song the applause was spontaneous and genuine. Genevieve bowed to them all, a little smile curving her lips, a pretty flush tinging her cheeks—but she would not sing again.

“Bravely done, for you were frightened, know,” said Douglas, as he led her away.

“Yes—I was—a little,” she acknowledged, “am always timid when singing before a number my voice is not remarkable, and I am afraid that my audience may prove unsympathetic.”

“Do not fear ; you must not undervalue your voice ; it is bird-like and delicious,” replied Lester, promptly, thinking that it must indeed prove a cold audience who could listen to those sweet notes unthrilled.

They seated themselves in a deep window ; a little group were in animated conversation nearby ; one young man—an artist—was relating an interview he had had with a very celebrated French master—one whose paintings were world renowned. He was heard to remark,—

“He had a face that once seen was difficult to forget, a face that attracted all.”

"One does meet such faces occasionally—I did once," said Lester, softly, "in a crowd."

"Tell me about it," exclaimed Genevieve.

"What—here?" smiling down at her.

"Certainly—why not?" innocently.

"We should be interrupted, I fear, for it is a long story, and deserves your undivided attention."

"Some other time, then," said Genevieve, contentedly, and Douglas smiled at her.

Mary Ward caught the look; she read him well, and a half pleased, half tender smile lit her pleasant face as she glanced at the young girl.

"He loves her," mused she. "I like him, he is worthy of Genevieve—and I could not pay him a greater compliment than that."

In a few moments Douglas spoke again.

"I should like to tell you the story of the face that so attracted me—soon. Perhaps we can arrange a time when you could listen to it. Are you disengaged to-morrow afternoon?"

"No—Mary and I attend an afternoon tea," she replied thoughtfully.

"The next afternoon then."

"I have an engagement, but Mary has none."

"I don't intend to tell my story to Miss Ward," said the young man, smiling in such a merry fashion that Genevieve smiled too. "You alone

are to listen to it—you may repeat it to your friend if you like.”

Genevieve flushed, she hardly knew why, his tone had grown so tender. An afternoon was fixed upon, and then a silence fell between them—it was an eloquent silence. Genevieve wondered that the simple fact that he had a story to tell should suddenly seem such a serious and important matter. And when she found Lester's eyes fixed wistfully upon her face, a shyness that she could not shake off seized her ; she concealed it as well as she could, but her cheek had flushed to a warm and beautiful tint, and her heart beat rapidly. In fact, they were both too agitated to carry on very much conversation, although neither dreamed the full extent of the other's feelings. Lester left her with some emotion ; what would her answer be ?

He told his story. A few hours later Harry Gordon chanced to meet Lester and was struck by his radiant face.

“What has happened, my dear fellow ? You look as if you carried sunshine in your heart.”

“I do,” came the answer, spoken with some emotion, “for Genevieve Arlington returns my love.”

THE END.

AT FARMLANDS.

AT FARMLANDS.



“MY dear,” remarked Mrs. Sheldon, turning to her husband, “where shall we spend the Summer?”

“Newport again, I suppose,” replied the gentleman, thoughtfully.

“Papa!” cried Miss Connie. “We have tried that for three Summers!”

“Well, where shall we go then, puss? When I proposed spending a few months on the other side, you all quite objected to the plan.”

“I propose,” said the young girl, speaking so earnestly that a rosy flush crept over her pretty face, “oh, papa, I propose that we spend this Summer at the dear old farm!”

Ted and Jack, aged respectively eight and ten, greeted this welcome remark with a glad shout, and danced up and down in a state of great excitement.

“Hush, boys! you will deafen me,” exclaimed Mr. Sheldon, trying to frown, but smiling in spite of himself; then, turning upon his daughter he said, “What an absurd child you are! After

your first gay Winter in society, here you are begging me to allow you to become buried alive. It is all nonsense, my dear, and to Newport we shall go."

The tears started in Connie's sweet brown eyes, and her lips quivered as she exclaimed,—

"Newport is so tiresome ! One must keep dressed just so all the time, and ride in state when venturing abroad. I like all that for the Winter, but oh, for this Summer let us enjoy the freedom and pure bracing air of Farmlands ! Say yes, papa !"

"What does mamma say," said the gentleman.

Mrs. Sheldon hesitated, and then remarked with a smile,—

"I shrewdly suspect Connie has not altogether outgrown her childish tastes ; she is just as fond of picking cherries and riding upon a hay-cart, as ever she was."

"Of course I am, mamma," said Connie, with a laugh. "Only think of the blackberries we can pick, and the hammocks we can string up under the shady old trees ! And think of the fishing—oh, papa, I saw your eye brighten ! Then you want to go, after all !"

"But Connie, my dear, what will your admirers say?"

The girl laughed and blushed very prettily, and said,—

“Now papa, I shall enjoy next Winter all the better if we spend the Summer at Farmlands. Would you like to go, Kate?” turning to her elder sister.

“Miss Sheldon stole a half involuntary glance at the engagement ring that flashed and sparkled upon her slender finger, and replied placidly,—

“I think it would be very pleasant, dear.”

“Well then, pet,” cried Mr. Sheldon, stroking Miss Connie’s pretty curly head somewhat fondly, “to Farmlands we go; but if you are lonely because only the whippoorwills serenade you, do not complain.”

The girl gave her father an embrace and a kiss, and danced in a light-hearted fashion around the room. Someone stepped through the door leading from the parlor, and Miss Connie found that she had almost waltzed into the arms of a handsome young man.

“Practising a new step, Connie?” he said.

“Why, Cousin Fred, how you frightened me! I did not hear you ring. No, I am not practising a new step at all, but I feel so happy that I cannot keep still. I have good news to tell you.”

“You certainly look in gay good spirits,” said Fred Armstrong, regarding the sweet, animated face with a smile. “But what is the news, dear

cousin ? Don't tell me you are engaged to be married !” turning a little pale.

“ Oh, no, Fred !” Then with a merry laugh, “ Do you think I would dance around and look as joyous for that ? No—we are to spend this Summer at Farmlands !”

A moment's pause, then the young man said,—

“ My poor little Connie ! Do you call *that* good news ? Why, you will find yourself buried alive.”

“ It is the most enchanting country, Fred !”

“ But dull ! Why, Newport is the place for a girl who has been courted and petted as you have been, Connie.”

“ Who pets me, pray ?” exclaimed the girl, with a laugh and half-indignant flush. “ I would not allow that !”

“ Society pets you ; don't you realize it ? You will miss it all, believe me, more than you realize now. Who suggested Farmlands ? Kate, I suppose.”

“ I suggested it—the idea was all my own. I want to see the old moss-covered mill, the noisy, babbling brooks, the dear old barn and Fido—who must be growing old now, dear fellow.”

“ Well, you can do all that in less than a week.”

“ Not in less time than three months.”

Fred regarded her with a half smile, then said suddenly,—

"Perhaps it is just as well, Miss Connie; you have been very gay. Do you know that Edmundson is desperately in love with you?"

"Oh, nonsense, Fred! You must be dreaming!" cried Connie, laughing, and looking like a lovely, light-hearted child, with her soft brown eyes and wavy locks.

"He looked very fierce when you danced three times with me, I know."

"Can a blond man look fierce?" asked Miss Connie.

"You don't favor blonds, do you?" said Fred Armstrong, rather ruefully.

"Yes I do—for I like you, Fred," said the girl, instantly, giving him an affectionate glance; for she was very fond of her cousin.

"You like me—oh, how cold that sounds! Now, dear," speaking hurriedly, "I love you."

"And I love you, Fred—you know that I do," stretching out a little warm hand.

The young man took it and pressed an eager kiss upon that small hand, but sighed profoundly as he noticed how sisterly Connie's glance and smile was. After a moment he said,—

"Speaking of blonds, I hear a friend of yours is coming back to America who is not a blond—Ralph Hastings; do you remember him?"

A moment's thought, then the girl exclaimed eagerly,—

“Why yes, indeed I do! So Ralph Hastings is coming home at last! How long it is since I saw him! Why it must be six, seven—why, it is eight years since he left us and went away to college! Then he finished his education abroad, he has been travelling about there ever since. He was a boy of fifteen when he said good-by to us. Kate was twelve, and I must have been just ten years of age. He was quiet and grave at times, but always ready to start a nice game, or take us for a drive in the country. I should like to meet him. Dark—yes, he was very dark, I remember, with great thoughtful eyes.”

Fred had restlessly picked up a pretty photograph of Miss Connie, then he said,—

“That is excellent! May I have it?”

“No, it belongs to mamma. I gave your sister one, though; this is the last one that is left.”

“So, Connie, while you are shut off from the gay world, at Farmlands, Ralph Hastings will, in all probability, be enjoying Newport life; his family, you know, own a villa there.”

Connie looked so thoroughly undisturbed, and so sonsy and happy, that Fred could not refrain from exclaiming,—

“What a dear little girl you are! This winter has not changed you in the least. Connie, I’ll find time to spend a few days with you all at Farmland’s, just to see how you like country quiet, you

know. May I come, or are you running away from us all because we weary you? Every one will think that, I suppose."

"I am not tired of any of you, not a bit, but I want to pull cherries from those splendid trees, and do just exactly as I please, you know."

"Well, if you grow thoroughly tired of it all, remember mother would feel only too delighted to welcome you to the villa." And after a few more words, the young man made his adieux.

Several weeks later found the Sheldons quite at home in the roomy farm-house. It was not unpicturesque, for its gray surface was relieved by luxuriant green vines. Connie enjoyed every moment of her life, and when Fred made the promised visit, he found her looking more lovely than ever. Such gay good times raking the fragrant hay and piling it up in great heaps—such long, dreamy afternoons in the hammocks swung under the trees, with a book which the beautiful surroundings made it difficult to read, while the bees droned drowsily, and the tinkle of the cow-bell was the only sound to disturb the charmed stillness.

"All things that love the sun are out of doors ;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth,"

quoted Kate one day, as she and Connie sat upon a rock covered with silvery moss, and watched their father quietly angling for trout.

The sunlight fell in checkered shades through the interlacing boughs of the grand old trees ; in Miss Connie's opinion, nowhere could there be found woods as wild and beautiful as those in the neighborhood of Farmlands. A pretty gray squirrel ran nimbly up a tree near them, and paused on a branch to survey the two girls ; a song bird burst forth into a song of ecstasy, while the brook kept up a low murmuring melody.

"Look, Connie, there is a splendid thistle," said Kate, "don't you remember the poem I read the other day, where the thistle is described as

"Flinging open his armor green
Till the purple silken vest is seen,
Then changing to a fairy, in gossamer grace,
That brushed with her silvery robes my face
As she floated high and low."

"I remember," replied Connie, half reclining upon the mossy rock, "and just now, as I look up at the sky through those branches, I think I can understand what the poet meant when speaking of 'skies so blue that they flash.'"

And so the happy days flew by ; the Sheldons had never spent a happier Summer ; the pure, bracing air was invigorating. As for Ted and Jack, Mrs. Sheldon wondered if they could ever again content themselves with the tiresome restraints of city life.

One delicious morning, after watching Fred and Mr. Sheldon depart for a day of fishing, Connie

proposed that they should all go blackberrying. She had noticed a field full of berries about a mile off. After a little coaxing Kate consented to go; so, armed with tin kettles, the little party started down the lane. Connie was in her gayest of good spirits, and went half skipping, half dancing, along the shady old road, feeling it a pleasure to be alive upon such a glorious day—a day made up of sunshine and blue sky. The air was sweet, and song-birds warbled and darted past the little party as they strolled along the pretty country road-side. The boys were full of fun, and delighted when they could catch a glimpse of a shy squirrel or a rabbit; their merry chatter and light-hearted laughter chimed very pleasantly upon the still air.

At length a glad shout announced the meadow, and another shout greeted the bushes, that were thick with blackberries. Such a wealth of them! Talking for a time was suspended, and earnest work soon filled the kettles to the very brim.

“A splendid crop, Kate,” remarked Miss Connie, in tones of satisfaction. “I don’t think I ever saw a finer.”

They had picked so earnestly that Connie had scratched her white hands, and an impertinent bramble had made a rent in the sleeve of her simple light dress; but such misfortunes were unheeded, and she never once noticed that her shade

hat had fallen back over her shoulders, while the sun streamed down full upon her laughing, eager face.

Kate had just suggested that they should all rest in the shade, when a crashing was heard through the bushes near them ; Connie gave a little scream of surprise as a young man came pushing his way through the brambles.

He paused, and surveyed the group for a moment, his glance rested longest upon Connie, with her startled brown eyes and sweet face flushed by the sun's ardent kisses, the dimpled elbow just appearing through the rent in her sleeve. Then a sudden most attractive smile lit his face as he exclaimed :

"Don't you remember me, Connie—Kate?"

The two girls regarded him with astonishment; this broad-shouldered man, with his clear, dark eyes, and rather winning face, was certainly a total stranger.

"Then you have forgotten Ralph Hastings?" speaking half reproachfully.

After an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, the two girls gave him a most cordial greeting.

"But how did you remember us? We were children when you last saw us," queried Kate.

"That is true; but I remembered Connie's eyes; they have not changed in the least. And then I was not altogether unprepared for the

meeting ; I was informed that you were all spending the summer in this region."

He had called her "Connie," this tall stranger with his distinguished bearing and very attractive smile. The girl did not know whether to feel pleased or offended ; but then he was an old friend, to be sure, and not a bit like the men whom she had met at dancing parties and receptions ; they were comparative strangers, but Ralph Hastings had been a playmate, always so gentle, and ready to amuse and divert them. So Miss Connie looked up with a little friendly smile, and forgot to be stately when the conversation turned upon those days of long ago.

"Do you remember," Ralph asked, "my dog, Leo, the good old Newfoundland whom we taught to carry baskets and pick up stones ?"

"Oh, yes !" cried Connie, eagerly, "and once he lifted me out of the brook when my foot slipped on a stone."

"I remember that day well. Poor Leo, he died long ago," remarked Hastings. "Miss Kate, are you still fond of botany ?"

"Yes—you have a most excellent memory, Mr. Hastings."

"Oh, how formal ! You must call me Ralph—you and Connie," and he looked from one to the other, adding with his kindly smile, "We are such old friends, you know."

“He thinks me a child,” thought Connie, “for he called sister ‘Miss Kate.’” And, indeed, Miss Kate, with her glossy hair quite smooth, and her shade hat where it should be—placed upon her dark braids instead of slipping back over her shoulders, looked very much grown up. Poor Connie noticed with chagrin that the soft locks that she was wont to arrange so charmingly upon the crown of her little head were now tumbling over her shoulders, like a child’s. Kate’s cheeks were cool and rather pale. Connie was sure that her own were flushed by the sunshine.

Perhaps Ralph Hastings liked rosy cheeks and soft, tumbled locks ; at all events he turned often in their direction, and as he was a very discerning young man, he noticed that a certain little somebody looked distressed when addressed as “Connie ;” and so, when next he ventured a remark, he said rather demurely :

“Miss Connie, is not this a dear old field ?”

He was rewarded by such a smile that he felt well repaid for the effort.

The two boys were much attracted by their sisters’ friend, and when at length Kate suggested that they should start for home, he had succeeded in quite winning the hearts of little Ted and Jack, perhaps chiefly because he had not outgrown his remembrance of his own boyish days, and could sympathize and enjoy with the best of them.

Connie darted now here, now there, collecting quite a bunch of wild flowers ; she had finished tucking them in the belt of her sash when, chancing to look up, she found Hastings' eyes fastened upon her with a smile in their dark depths.

" You are smiling," said the girl. " Of what were you thinking, sir ? "

" Of this—you are not a bit changed," he said, and this time the smile spread over his dark face like real sunshine.

" I am much changed," exclaimed Connie. " I must be, for I have learned so much since I was but ten years old, you know."

" I dare say ; you have certainly learned to arrange flowers effectively ; it seems to me every one is just placed where it should be," surveying the graceful bunch the girl wore.

" Those are not so fine as the flowers that were sent you all winter," remarked Ted, chancing to overhear the remark. " I tell you those were beauties, Connie, and Will Howard, who lives next door to us, told me once that my sister Connie was a belle, and I said to him, ' Belle means beautiful, doesn't it ? ' It's a French word, I know, for I had it in my last French lesson. And he laughed and said, ' Yes, it must mean that in this case, surely.' "

A glad shout was heard from Jack.

"Come here, Ted!" he cried. "I've found a nest with three young birds in it."

The boy ran over to his brother's side, and Connie said, "Oh! they must not touch it!" and anxiously joined her two little brothers.

"Do not frighten them—take one look and then come away," she said gently.

"I'm going to take it home with me; I can feed them on crumbs, and when they are old enough to fly they may fly away."

"No," said the girl, with gentle decision, "do not disturb the pretty home; it would cause the old birds as much distress as if some one were to seize you both and run away with you. Think how mamma would feel—and—oh, boys, you *shan't* touch it!" for the boys seemed for once deaf to their sister. "Come away," said Connie, while the tears started to her brown eyes.

If Ralph Hastings had not appeared just in time to catch Ted under his arm and carry him away, while he led Jack along by the hand, that pretty nest would surely have been severed from the branch which it hung. Gently enough he reproved both boys, and his words were so earnest and so kind that Ted and Jack were much impressed.

One pleasant afternoon Connie Sheldon seated herself under a huge oak, prepared to watch a game of tennis in which her sister and Hugh

Barton were the opponents of Cousin Fred and Mr. Sheldon. The four were well matched, and the contest threatened to become exciting. Kate and her lover were capital partners, and if one failed to return the ball, the other was almost invariably ready to make amends for the failure. It was a pretty sight to see them flitting around so lightly and swiftly, and Connie, who had played several sets, was just tired enough to enjoy watching the others.

Hearing a footstep, Connie turned and saw Ralph Hastings approaching.

"Good afternoon, faire ladye," said he, gayly. "Have you wearied of tennis?" throwing himself upon the grass by her side, and picking up her racquet, which he examined with the eye of a connoisseur.

"I am resting in the shade; is not that a delightful breeze? See, Kate is nodding to you."

Ralph pulled off his cap and called a good afternoon to the tennis players, and then turned to Connie, saying,—

"Do you know I found a four-leaf clover yesterday? I cherish it, for it will bring me good luck, perhaps."

"You look happy," said Connie, with a smile. "I believe you are quite independent of anything the clover may do for you?"

"Does that mean I have everything I wish

for ? I haven't, but, perhaps, now that I wear the clover leaf near my heart, I may succeed in everything that I may undertake," he said, in half laughing, half serious tones.

"‘Desire success and you shall command it,’" quoted the girl, idly, while her eyes were fixed with a smile upon her sister, who had just managed to return a difficult ball. She did not notice the earnest, contented gaze Hastings bent upon her, or notice how his eyes became suddenly soft and rather tender. He was thinking how delightful it was under the shade of the trees, with Connie by his side, looking well in her white tennis suit, with its gay red belt, when the girl exclaimed,—

"Just look at that saucy robin readbreast ! Why, I've actually run toward him to pick up a ball, and Sir Robin did not fly, but merely hopped a little out of his way. Perhaps the bird is tame !" eagerly.

"Perhaps. Shall I catch him for you ? Robins are usually not very tame."

"Well," said the girl, while the color rose to her cheeks and her eyes were bright with excitement, "if it wouldn't frighten the robin much, you know, why, you might try to catch him for me—just for a few minutes."

So Ralph sprang up and went toward the bird; it hopped away from him ; he found no difficulty

in capturing it. Connie had risen to her feet. She held out both small hands, and tenderly took the bird from Hastings.

"If it is so tame it will not fear me," she said.

"Its wing is disabled."

"Oh, I'm so sorry! I wonder how it happened?" holding the bird very gently, while its glance darted from her face to Ralph's. "If birdie could speak he would say that he was very much alarmed, no doubt," said Connie.

"If birdie could speak, he would say that he was very happy, no doubt," said Ralph.

"Do you really think so? Ah, birdie, how does it feel to fly? I often wish I could. Don't you find it lonely way up there among the clouds, or are you joined by a gay party of friends? Are you longing now to soar to the tip-top branch of this tall old tree, are you wondering what great giant has seized you in his clasp? Never fear, birdie, I would not harm you for worlds;" and for a moment Connie held the bright-eyed little robin softly against her cheek. "He is much terrified," she said then; "his little heart is beating and throbbing. I shall set him free; it is a shame to frighten a bird so."

"Better protect Robin a little while longer," said Ralph, "for see, there are cat's ears over there, and a pair of very green eyes."

"Why, it's Fanchon! How dare you call

Fanchon's eyes green, sir ? But—well, they do look green just now—she has seen my bird and is coming here. Go home, Fanchon ! Don't come near me—go home this instant !” cried the girl in sweet, imperative tones which had their effect, for after a moment's pause, Miss Fanchon turned and walked with great dignity towards the house. “She's offended now,” laughed Connie. “I never spoke so harshly to Fanchon before. It was all for your sake, dear Robin ; I shall feed you and care for you until your wing is quite, quite strong. Will that be long, do you think ?”

Before the young man could reply, the gay party of tennis players flocked toward them, laughing and talking over the game.

“Well, who won ?” queried Ralph.

Kate swept him a curtsy and said :

“We are subjects for congratulation, Hugh and I.”

“I have known that for some time,” laughed Fred, adding, “Connie, what have you there, child, a bird ?”

“Yes, Fred, a robin that has hurt its wing ; it can't fly.”

“Give it to me, cousin ; perhaps it can fly.”

“No,” shrinking from him as he approached ; and in shrinking from him she unconsciously drew very near to Hastings, and Robin Red-

breast's heart was not the only one set a-throbbing just then.

"Nonsense, Connie! Don't be afraid; I'll merely toss him in the air. No doubt he'll take to his wings and fly away."

"Toss him in the air, Fred! He would fall to the ground and be killed!" said Connie, speaking very quietly.

But that little speech of Fred's! I think that young gentleman would have bitterly regretted it had he known how deep and unfavorable an impression it had made upon his fair cousin, for he was anxious to stand well in her eyes. Throwing himself upon the grass at her side, he said, at length,—

"Now, don't look so frightened. I'll not touch your robin; he has a pair of restless bright eyes, sure enough. Won't you join us in a game soon, Hastings? Connie and I will stand you, and—who feels like tempting tennis again? Will you, Kate?"

"No, I am warm, and quite contented to rest for a while."

"And I can't leave robin," said Connie.

"I'll take care of the bird, dear," said Kate. "I am fond of pets."

So, half reluctantly, the girl resigned him to her sister's tender mercies. Mr. Sheldon was ready to make the fourth in the set.

It was a very pretty sight to watch Connie at tennis. She was thoroughly graceful, and as quick as a flash.

"Do I baffle you?" she asked Ralph once, in a pause in the game. "I am trying to, for you're my enemy, you know."

"That last return was rather puzzling," he replied. "There does not seem to be much 'love' in this set."

"No, indeed, I should hope not—although when I first learned tennis, each set turned out a 'love set' for me," laughed Connie. "Now, Fred, it is your serve—please puzzle them a little." And to the chime of merry laughter and light-hearted repartee the game drew to a close.

And blithely the days slipped by, and sweet were the evenings when the quiet moon looked serenely down and the heavens appeared

"Inlaid with patens of bright gold."

Connie would sometimes accompany her voice on a guitar, and sweet was the song upon the stillness of the night. Fred's banjo was often heard thrumming, and the country folks were wont to remark "that if all city folks were as merry and gay, a town must be a happy place to live in."

And still Hastings lingered in the neighborhood of Farmlands, and still Fred Armstrong lingered. It was impossible for him to make Connie under-

stand how very dear she had become to him ; she treated him as a younger sister might.

And Ralph realized how Constance Sheldon, with her merry, happy nature, the overflowings of an innocent heart, had brightened his life. He loved her, and at length decided to tell his love. How impatient he was to hear the answer, and yet he hesitated to speak. Brave and self-reliant Ralph Hastings ! His great love made him timid and not over self-confident.

Kate saw how with his eyes he followed her sister, and how pale and silent he sometimes seemed, until Connie appeared ; then a flush would steal over his bronzed cheek, and a happy light to his eyes.

And one day he spoke. Connie turned pale, almost as pale as her lover ; then the lovely roses came crowding to her cheek, and when, at Ralph's bidding, she lifted her brown eyes timidly to his, the young man's doubts and trepidation vanished quite away in the wave of happiness that swept over him.

THE END.

CHRISTMAS AT HILLSIDE.

CHRISTMAS AT HILLSIDE.



“**H**ERE we are at the station at last !” said Jack Carleton, cheerily. “And now good-by to noisy steam cars. I see Michael with the sleigh. What a glorious moonlight night ! Are you tired out with the long journey, Gladys ? ”

“Not a bit tired,” replied a pleasant voice. “I like travelling you know, Jack.” Then, turning from her brother-in-law, the young lady addressed her sister : “Are you cold, Miriam ? ”

“I confess I shall be glad to find myself once more in my pretty home,” answered Mrs. Carleton. “I am not as fond of travelling as you are, you know, Gladys. Just one month since we left home, Jack,” observed the lady, seating herself in the sleigh.

“Yes, just about,” replied her husband, tucking the fur robes snugly about the two ladies ; then, springing into the front seat, he took the reins from the coachman, and off they started, to the music of the merry sleigh-bells.

“Can you manage to keep at all comfortable,

dear ? ” remarked Mrs. Carleton, addressing her sister. “ It is intensely cold.”

“ The furs protect me nicely ; I don’t mind the cold in the least. How much sky you can see in the country, Miriam ! I like that.”

“ Yes, plenty of sky and trees and mountains, Gladys, not much else—very little society, I mean ; still, I like it, and I think you will enjoy your Christmas amongst the hills. I shall take such comfort in your society. I don’t mean to let you get a bit homesick. Did you miss me when I married Jack and came here to live ? ”

“ Oh, so much more than I can tell you ! ” exclaimed the girl, slipping her arm around her sister and giving her an impulsive little embrace. “ I have missed you all these months.”

“ Just six,” observed Mrs. Carleton, thoughtfully. “ Jack and I have been married just six months. I think you will like my home, it is so cosy.”

“ I suppose Washington was very gay while you were there, Miriam.”

“ Yes, very. Jack was afraid I might find it monotonous to remain at Hillside all Winter. I was not of that opinion ; however, he carried me off for several weeks, or perhaps a couple of months, at Washington. He has many friends there, and I have several, you know, so that we

were very gay. But I was the first to propose that we should return home."

"Did he want to come?" asked Gladys.

"He was absolutely longing to, I found, for he is very domestic in his tastes. I did not know that when I spoke of returning. 'We were driving upon one of the gayest avenues in Washington, meeting friends, and with jingling sleigh-bells all about us; but I felt homesick, and suddenly said, 'Oh, Jack, let's go home! I miss our pleasant home and warm-hearted neighbors; everything seems so strange here.' How his face brightened! We left the gay city upon the following day, stopped for you on the homeward route, and here we are! Now I suppose your friends will hardly thank me for running away with you just at the height of the season."

"Oh, they won't grieve very much," laughed Gladys.

"Not even Mr. Walters?"

"Mr. Walters? Oh, he will surely survive my absence," returned the sweet young voice.

"It is bright moonlight, and yet I cannot really tell if you are blushing."

"I am not," laughed Gladys, merrily.

"Don't you love him, child?"

"Not the least bit in the world," was the prompt reply.

"Poor fellow ! Not even when he is so very anxious that you should ?"

"That does not seem to influence me," remarked the girl.

"And what did he think of that for a reply ? Did you tell him that ?"

"Yes. I told him that," said Gladys, softly.

"Poor fellow !"

"He would not listen at first—wanted to give me time to think it over. How complacent he was all the time !"

"Well, you will have abundant chance to think here, pet."

"Oh, but I don't intend to think," cried Gladys. "I want to enjoy myself."

"And thinking of Mr. Walters would interfere with your enjoyment ? Well, I am afraid that he does not stand very much chance of winning you, child."

"Oh, no ! See the lights amongst the trees, how they twinkle. Have you pleasant neighbors, Miriam ?"

"Some of them are thoroughly charming people."

"Oh, that must be delightful ! Thoroughly charming people are scarce. I don't believe I shall find it very lonely here, for often in a great crowd and crush one does not meet thoroughly

charming people, you know," said Gladys, in a very wise fashion.

Then she glanced up at the sky ; how placid it appeared, and so thickly spangled with stars—the sight of such a broad expanse of firmament somehow soothed and rested the young girl, although a moment before she would have laughed at the idea of needing rest and soothing ; but the happiest of us have our petty cares and discomforts, and the calm serenity sometimes banishes them quite away.

"I think if we oftener looked up at the sky, quite steadily, you know, we should feel happier," remarked Gladys, thoughtfully.

"My dear child, Gerald Waters shall not annoy you with his persistent avowals of love. I never before dreamed that you were not perfectly happy," said her sister.

"I am very happy," laughed Gladys ; and indeed her laugh sounded so. "I brought my skates with me ; Miriam, is there ice near the house ?"

"Yes, very near."

"Are both of you girls asleep—you are so quiet ?" said Jack Carleton.

Gladys leaned forward and said,—

"We were talking all the time, but the jingle of the bells drowns our voices. What sweet bells they are, Miriam."

“I think you will like Hillside ; it has already thrown a spell over you ; dear child, our bells and our sky are such as you can find anywhere.”

“Who lives in that house where the lights twinkle so brightly through the trees—neighbors of yours, Miriam ?”

“Yes, the Claires.”

“Thoroughly charming people ?” demurely.

“Yes, saucy one. Mr. and Mrs. Claire are delightful—so is Alice, their daughter, and Robert their son.”

“And is that tall spire that looks so black and distinct against the sky the spire of your church ?” she asked.

“No, our church is beyond our home.”

“Are we almost home now ?”

“Yes, dear, are you tired ?”

“Oh no, only serious ; I asked on that account you know. There are more lights twinkling through the fir trees.”

“The Graylands reside there—pleasant people ; I prefer the Claires however. You must see their home ; it is perfect, so comfortable, so thoroughly substantial. They entertain charmingly, make one feel at home, you know, and all that.”

“I like such people,” said Gladys.

“You are sure to like Mrs. Claire, she is so refined, so kind-hearted and motherly.”

"And Alice?" pursued the bird-like voice.

"Do you know Alice Claire?" exclaimed Mrs. Carleton, in surprised tones.

"Oh, no, only you mentioned her name a few moments ago."

"Oh, I see! Well, she is a nice girl, fair, tall and rather graceful; she is engaged to be married to Harry Sherwood—the Sherwoods reside in that house just at the bend of the road. Robert Claire is a lawyer, a warm friend of my husband's, and as companionable a young man as can be found. Now there are more lights through the trees; Who do you suppose resides there?"

"Thoroughly charming people?"

"I'll ask Jack. Jack dear, this little sister of mine wishes to know if thoroughly charming people reside in that house whose lights we see shining so brightly."

"Tell her yes, Miriam," laughed the young man. "'There's a light in the window for thee, love.'"

"That is our home, dear," explained Mrs. Carleton. Gladys looked forth eagerly through the darkness, but could not discern much; the trees hid the house partly from view.

Swiftly the sleigh skimmed over the snow; a winding road approached the Carleton's home, and at length the little party found themselves at

the foot of the stone steps. As Jack assisted his sister-in-law to alight, he said :

“ Welcome to our home, dear sister ! ”

“ It’s built of stone, isn’t it,” said Gladys, “ like a castle ? ”

A stream of light shone through the open doorway. A maid relieved the ladies of their extra bags and wraps, and Miriam’s housekeeper stood in the doorway ; at her mistress’s kind word of welcome her honest, sensible face broke into a gratified smile.

They entered the broad hall, with its polished floor and winding staircase ; a silver lamp, suspended by chains from the ceiling, sent forth radiance, and through the doorway Gladys caught a glimpse of the drawing-room ; its appearance pleased her immensely. Luxuriously warm and bright—that was the impression Miss Elsford received of her sister’s home. The hot supper awaiting the travellers was very welcome, and might indeed have won praise from the most fastidious.

When it was bed time Mrs. Carleton slipped her arm about her sister’s waist and led her upstairs and along the hall until she paused upon the threshold of one of the prettiest rooms Gladys had ever beheld. It glowed in the firelight like a ruby.

“ Do you like the red room, child ? ”

"Like it !" replied Gladys, with a little sigh of satisfaction. "I should think I did ! I have a passion for red, you know, Miriam, rich warm tints."

"I know, confessed Mrs. Carleton, "and I thought of you while furnishing the little nest."

Pushing her sister gently into a great arm chair, she proceeded to pull the pins out of the abundant brown hair until the coil fell in a tumultuous fashion over the girl's shoulders. She regarded the fair occupant of the big chair for a moment with fond, approving eyes, then giving her a kiss and an embrace, said, "Now good-night, and pleasant dreams to you," pausing at the door to add, "You look nice in my red room, with your curly locks streaming over your shoulders, and the firelight dancing about you ; but don't sit up half the night dreaming there of Gerald Walters ; he is not the true prince, my sweet princess—I never thought he was. I am sure he thought his great wealth could buy him everything in the world, even my little sister's love. But there, I am keeping you up—good-night again." And slipping out of the room, Mrs. Carleton closed the door softly after her.

The next morning Gladys awoke and looked about with a pair of satisfied brown eyes. The sunlight streamed through the lace hangings festooned before each window ; she thought the

room very delightful, with its key-note of red, and the view from those windows. She drew a long breath of delight as the snow-capped mountains, looming up so grand and imposing, met her gaze.

A little later, Miss Elsford ran light-heartedly down the stairs, humming a gay little song. She entered the drawing-room ; it was unoccupied ; the centre table was adorned with a generous bunch of hot-house flowers, but Gladys's first step was toward the windows, where she remained for a long time. The scene stretching before her was impressive enough, recalling Alpine scenery ; truly, Miriam's home was in the heart of a pleasant country. The world was carpeted with snow ; icicles hanging from the trees did not seem to intimidate the hardy snow-birds ; they chatted in a saucy, blithe fashion, and hopped from limb to limb as though taking their morning exercise in that way. They were hardly still enough to feel the cold, such restless little creatures ! Gladys would have liked to throw a few crumbs of bread toward them. One little fellow amused himself by hopping along a limb until he had dislodged every particle of the snow.

"Now," thought Gladys, "if he is wise he will remain there."

But no : the bold fellow flitted down to another branch, completely covered with snow, and there

he calmly stood and chattered incessantly. Gladys smiled at his hardihood.

Then Miriam and her husband came running down the stairs ; they laughed at their guest for being such an early bird after the long journey of the previous day, and asked Gladys if she felt rested and if she slept well in her red room. To both these questions Miss Elsford was able to give a satisfactory reply ; then Miriam led the way to the dining-room. Gladys chatted and laughed while seated at the breakfast table, and many a glance wandered toward the windows that commanded quite a different view from that which had so engrossed her while in the drawing-room. She had expressed herself well pleased with Hillside, and indeed seemed as happy as a lark in the cheerful dining-room.

“Now, what is the programme for to-day ?” queried Jack. “We must not allow our little sister to mope or become lonely or she will want to flit away from us, Miriam.”

“No fear of that. I am amused and diverted, everything is so very different from our surroundings in the city. The mountains, I mean, and the landscape—it gives one such a free, unconstrained feeling. I don’t feel shut in here, or the least bit lonely,” exclaimed Gladys in her impulsive fashion.

“Jack is afraid you will weary of the place,”

observed Mrs. Carleton. "He suggested that we should invite a number of young people here for the holidays."

"Please do not!" cried Gladys. "At least not for my sake."

"Hardly flattering to your friends," laughed Miriam, looking well pleased, however. "If you are content, why, that is sufficient; in fact, I want you all to myself, and a lot of young folks from the city would put all hopes of a cosy time together quite out of the question."

"Don't worry about me," said Gladys, addressing her tall brother-in-law. "I feel at home here. I like Miriam's stone castle very much." And the young man rewarded that speech with a gratified smile.

And the time slipped away pleasantly enough. Gladys met several of her sister's friends, and found them congenial and warm-hearted. The preparations for the Christmas tree that was to be lighted in the quaint Episcopal church brought them all together in a sociable fashion.

One cold, clear day, as the two sisters were returning home with a carriage full of holly, they met Harry Sherwood, who lived in the house just at the bend of the road. He greeted the two ladies with a smile, and informed them that he was bound for the city. Among other things he had a long list of articles to purchase for his

mother—gimcracks for the tree, he said, and asked if there was anything in that line he could do for them.

“No, thank you, Mr. Sherwood,” replied Mrs. Carleton. “My husband has taken a formidable list—perhaps you two will meet. You have a cold day for your long journey.”

“Yes, but I shall return in a few days—in time for the tree,” he returned, and with pleasant good-bys on both sides, they separated.

In the gloaming of the cold winter day Harry Sherwood found himself standing upon the steps of a fine city mansion. A servant answered his ring; he was shown into the spacious drawing room. A cheerful grate fire glowed in the room beyond, and seeing a familiar figure seated before it, Harry, without more ado, directed his steps in that direction. His friend gave him a cordial welcome, and then the two young men seated themselves.

“Were you dreaming all by yourself in the fire-light? queried Sherwood.

“Looks like it, doesn’t it?” replied the other, with a smile.

“You must find it pretty lonely in this big empty barn of a house,” continued Harry. “How long do the folks remain on the other side, Cecil?”

“The length of their stay is indefinite, I believe.

I am so busy just now that I have not had a chance to feel lonely."

"All the same I have come to carry you off with me—yes, don't look so astonished, I mean just what I say. You must spend the holidays with me, at Hillside,"

"My dear boy !"

"No excuses ! I won't listen to them, my fine fellow. You are to do just as I tell you."

"I can't get away just now, although I should like to be with you."

"You must—I want you. Come, take just a few days' rest ; you can manage it, and it will do you good."

"I don't need the rest, Harry. I can't leave my work."

"You must. Come oblige me this once ; the sleighing is glorious, and the moonlight nights entrancing."

"I dare say—with Alice Claire by your side. I should be very much in the way."

"No you wouldn't." There was a pause. "The fact is, we've had our first little quarrel, Cecil," and Harry's bright face fell.

He clasped his hands behind his curly head and stared into the fire.

"Ah, that's a pity !" said Cecil.

"Now, isn't it ? And now we're both on our dignity."

“Each one too proud to make the first advance, eh ?”

“It won’t do for me to make an advance just yet, and besides Alice was so willful that my silence may serve to frighten her a little, you know.”

“Ah, you can’t keep that up very long—your silence—I fancy. How long is it since you spoke, Harry ?”

“Let me see it’s two—three days ; it seems an age,” declared the young man with a profound sigh. “I’ll tell you all about it. We were all invited to an informal dance for Tuesday evening—it merged itself into a german, somehow. Alice and I danced together, of course. Arthur Clifton among the guests—you know him—handsome fellow, but a great flirt. I noticed him frequently glance admiringly at Alice ; it irritated me, I can tell you, and so I said at last, ‘Alice don’t dance with Clifton if you can help it—I don’t like the fellow.’ That was all that was said upon either side. Later in the evening, judge of my surprise when I saw Alice waltzing past me with Clifton as a partner ! They had chanced to meet in a figure of the german. I learned that later, but did not know it when I spoke reprovingly to Alice. She resented my rebuke—did not seem to fancy my expostulating with her—said she was not a child, and so on. We had quite a little dis-

pute. Well, the upshot of it was that Alice refused to speak to me 'for a long time,' she said, and that is just how the matter stands."

"Oh, but this will never do !" exclaimed Cecil. "You must make up and be friends. You were far too hasty, Harry ; I can't blame Miss Alice for becoming indignant. The fact is, you were jealous, and when is a jealous man ever inclined to be reasonable ? Make up and be friends ; believe me, it is your safest plan of action."

"In truth," said Harry, dolefully, "I don't feel that it would be safe to make too swift an advance. Who knows ? It might end matters between us entirely. I tell you my heart jumped up in my throat when I saw Alice Claire fingering her engagement ring as though undecided whether to give it back or not."

"Oh, you lovers !" exclaimed Cecil Heath. "What pangs you endure !"

"Don't brag," returned Harry. "I suppose you flatter yourself that you are heart-whole and fancy free."

A pensive expression stole over Cecil Heath's handsome face, then he said,—

"Fancy free ? Who knows ? But at this moment our great crowded city seems empty to me because a slim girl has been whisked away from it."

“Whisked away ? ” echoed Harry, wonderingly. “Married do you mean ? ”

Cecil Heath frowned, then smiled as he answered,—

“Oh, not so bad as that ! She is spending the holidays with relatives living at a distance.”

“Cecil, my dear old fellow, I believe you are in love ! ” cried Harry, his face quite shining with pleasure.

Cecil stared into the fire ; his dark cheek wore an unwonted flush ; he looked stirred and happy. There was a pause, then a rather plaintive tenor voice floated through the room :—

“If I’m walking or sleeping, I breath every prayer,
For Katie—the rose of the dell.”

“That last line does not describe her in the least, Harry,” said Cecil, pausing in his song. “She reminds me of ‘some faire lilye flower.’ ”

“Cecil Heath I am glad for you ! ” exclaimed his friend, heartily. “You have more money than you can possibly spend—why not marry ? ”

“If she will have me,” returned the young man humbly.

“Well,” said Harry, cheerily, “why not ? You are not a bad looking fellow, my friend, you are magnetic ; I have heard that you win friends readily.”

“And yet it may just happen that this one

friend whom I am the most anxious to win may say me nay."

"Have you any reason to think that she will? Does she dislike you?"

"She likes me a little, I think, but that is not saying much. She is a girl 'unschooled, unlettered and untaught' in the art of dissembling. Harry, if she dislikes me I should be sure to find it out." The rich voice was very tender.

"Well, don't wait too long before you speak, or you may lose her, Cecil; if she is so indescribably charming, you are not the only one who has made the discovery."

"She is universally admired and beloved," admitted the young man becoming rather pale, while a troubled look stole over his face. "I am afraid she would never think of me."

"That remark does not sound at all like you," said his friend, promptly. "Where is your courage, your pluck? Do you know that I heard you described a few days ago as a rising young lawyer who was making a name for himself in the world."

"Girls don't care for such things—I mean they would have very little weight with the very unworldly young lady of whom I am speaking; if she did not feel drawn toward me by something beside worldly fame and wealth, I am quite sure she would send me away to live through life with-

out her as best I may." And then very abruptly Cecil Heath changed the conversation.

Well, Harry Sherwood did not leave his friend until he had won a promise from him that they should spend Christmas together ; indeed, it would have been hard to say "No" to such a persistent fellow.

Hillside was busily preparing for the holidays ; mysterious parcels were smuggled into each house ; the Christmas tree at the church was progressing speedily, and seemed in danger of being overloaded with good things.

One sunny afternoon Alice Claire and Gladys were seated in the organ loft, busily preparing great letters of evergreen for the motto that was to form an arch over the pulpit.

" 'Peace on earth, good will toward men,' " said Gladys. "How nice it will look, Alice, and what a beautiful quotation it is ! It means, I suppose, that if we have disagreed or quarreled with any one we must make up at this glad Christmas time—at least, that is one of the meanings."

"Yes. I don't suppose you ever quarrel, Gladys—your face looks so good-tempered," said Alice, searching for a piece of string.

"I am only human," laughed Gladys, trying to arrange an unruly piece of evergreen more to her liking. "Isn't 'l' a difficult letter to form

out of evergreen, Alice? We never could do it so well if Mr. Sherwood had not cut the card board letters so neatly. It must have taken him a long time."

Alice did not reply; she wished, though, most earnestly, that she and Harry Sherwood were friends once again, and then somehow a bright tear fell upon her work. I am not sure whether others might not have followed when a well known voice fell upon her ear.

"That's Harry," whispered Alice Claire, "and he is talking to some one; come and look, it is a stranger, Gladys."

The two girls looked over the railing. Miss Elsford's little start of surprise was lost upon her friend. The two young men spoke to several, and then wandered out of sight.

"Mr. Sherwood's friend is distinguished looking," observed Alice.

"Yes—he is not a stranger to me," replied Gladys, with a pair of suspiciously rosy cheeks. "I have met Mr. Heath."

Then the two busy workers resumed their task, for time was flying, and there was much to be done. Soon a door near them was opened, and Harry Sherwood's voice was heard saying,—

"This is the organ loft; you must try our organ, Cecil; it is a very fine one."

The two young men paused in surprise as their

eyes fell upon the industrious girls. There was not a trace of pride in Alice Claire's answering glance. I think the motto had taught her a lesson ; somehow she and Harry were soon chatting as though nothing had occurred. As for those other two, why, Cecil greeted Gladys Elsford as if he were in a dream—a pleasant one, for his cheek was flushed and his eyes were sparkling.

“ Miss Elsford, I should never have thought of searching for you here !” he exclaimed.

“ And I am quite as much astonished to find you in our little church. I am spending the holidays with my sister, you know, Mr. Heath,” returned Gladys.

The young men soon found plenty to do. As the lettering was finished it fell to their share to arch the sentence over the pulpit. In giving directions and watching the work Gladys grew very much at home in her city friend's society. Yards of evergreen were festooned about the pillars ; they worked busily, and then donned furs and cloaks for the homeward walk.

It was cold, and the stars were beginning to appear ; a young moon showed distinct and clear in the dark blue sky. As Cecil tucked Gladys' small hand under his arm, he felt a thrill of happiness steal over him. What a fortunate fellow he was—how charming his companion, with her

glad, unstudied remarks, and fair, winsome face ! The chill freshness of the air was delicious—the blustering wind did not spoil the homeward walk in the least. How earnestly Heath longed to speak all that was in his heart ! Somehow, Gladys' frank, merry glance made that seem impossible. Then a sudden resolve seized him ; before he returned to the city he would know his fate—anything was better than this suspense.

An unwonted silence fell upon him ; he could not chatter as gayly as Harry and Alice seemed to be doing ; his silence must have influenced Gladys, for they two finished the walk quietly enough, and parted in the glimmering moonlight.

And the festival was a grand success ; the children will long remember that happy Christmas Eve. Light, warmth and gladness, and Santa Claus, in the midst of the brightness, dispensing gifts to all.

The following afternoon, which was Christmas afternoon, was spent upon the lake. Jack Carleton was there with his handsome wife, Miriam. Gladys' little figure was clad in sealskin ; her cheeks were rosy with exercise and happiness. Cecil, usually as brave as a lion, was assailed with doubts and fears ; he was longing to know his fate, but unmistakably afraid as to what the answer might be.

Perhaps fate pitied the young man and managed

it all for him. Gladys had suggested that each should skate alone, "for practice for awhile," and had started ahead bravely enough when a crack in the ice caught her skate ; she threw up her arms in alarm, and would have met with a severe fall had not Cecil caught her in his arms.

" My darling !" he exclaimed, holding her fast and firm.

A warm color swept over Gladys' sweet face at the involuntary exclamation, and then Cecil found courage to tell of his love. His words were not many but they were eloquent. Somehow his pleading did not fall upon deaf ears ; perhaps Gladys knew that the " true prince " spoke to her. At all events, that Christmas Day brought gladness to two young hearts.

THE END.

A NEW YEAR WISH.

A NEW YEAR WISH.



IT was dusk but not quite dark, and snow was beginning to descend silently and softly upon the earth. It settled in airy, delicate flakes upon the brown, leafless branches, until at length they glimmered white and ghostlike in the gathering gloom. Then hail mingled with the snow, beating against the window-pane with a sharp little tap.

Robina Arden left the cosy fireside, and seating herself in the deep bow window, looked up at the thickly falling snowflakes wandering down through immeasurable space.

"We shall have capital sleighing for New Year's week," mused the girl. "Winter holidays never seem quite complete without the snow."

Someone entered the fire-lit room, and seeing the girlish figure at the window, came forward, saying,—

"How solitary you look, Robina!"

"Will the snow be deep enough for the guests to come in sleighs to the dance this evening, Cousin Ferd?"

"Hardly—although a vast deal may fall in three hours' time, and this is a snow that will pack well upon the frozen earth."

"The first snow storm of the season," said the girl, musingly; and resting her pretty head back against the crimson cushion, she looked off into space with soft, dreamy eyes.

Ferd Darrell looked down at the thoughtful face and said,—

"Robina, the twilight time is making you feel wistful and a little sad. However, I dare predict that a grand waltz, a little later, through the brilliantly lighted rooms will chase all that away."

"Yes, indeed! Do you know I love our winter evening dances! But prepare yourself for a great pleasure this evening, cousin, for you are to meet a belle and a beauty at the dance—Miss Lydia Vincent. I am sure you have often heard us all speak of her."

"Have I?" queried the young man, absently.

"Yes—but you are not half listening to me."

"Pardon me—I was wondering how such grey eyes as yours could look so dark as they do just now. Do you know that you have very changeable eyes, little one?"

"But listen to me, please!" returned Robina. "You are to meet Miss Vincent to-night, and perhaps fall in love with her."

The young man's brow contracted, and a

pained expression came into his pleasant eyes; then he rallied and said playfully,—

“So I am to fall in love this evening, Robina? Pray describe the siren who is to steal my heart away.”

“Well,” said the girl, slowly, “she is much taller than I am, Cousin Ferd, slender, graceful, with a beautiful face; she is intellectual, and can converse cleverly with learned men; she has a kind heart, and gives very generously to charities; she is interested in ever so many, so you see, although she goes out so much in society, she is not the least little bit frivolous.”

“And she has a handsome brother. Now, Robina, my child, I cannot see plainly whether you are blushing or not—I think you are, but perchance it is only the glow from the firelight. You do think Arthur Vincent handsome, don’t you?”

“With all that fine golden brown hair and his wide open blue eyes? Yes, indeed!” said Robina. “He is like a Greek god.”

Darrell was silent for a time; the fire snapped and crackled, filling the room with a rosy light, and still the snow and hail beat against the window-pane; then a deep, earnest voice said,—

“Tell me one thing, Robina, tell me truly; would you grieve or feel at all sorry if Cousin Ferd should go away, quite out of your life?”

"Why," faltered Robina, raising great startled eyes to his, I should miss you, oh, so sadly!"

"I have often wondered if I should not feel happier far away," said the young man, with a sombre, restless look in his dark eyes.

"How can you talk so!" cried Miss Arden, with a little pathetic break in her sweet voice. "We are all so fond of you."

The doleful voice did not sound like Robina's, which always reminded her cousin of a bird's glad note; he shook off the sombre mood that had taken possession of him, and said cheerfully,—

"Come, we are not very gay. Forgive me for speaking so. I don't intend to go away, Robina. I could not," he added quietly.

Then his cousin bestowed upon him such a sunny smile that Darrell felt strongly inclined to clasp her in his arms, but dared not.

"You have not spoken of the holly framing the pictures and the round mirror and draping the mantel," said Miss Arden. "That is the very holly you and I gathered this morning to replace the Christmas decorations. Notice how coquettishly the red berries peep out here and there. Mamma says that she thinks the rooms never looked so fully decorated before."

"It all looks very gay," said the young man.

And what a grand time the holiday season is!"

cried Robina, clapping her hands gayly and impulsively.

“Wouldn’t it be jolly if we could have just what we wish, to begin the New Year?” said Darrell, watching the sweet, changeable face with a rather wistful look in his handsome eyes.

“Oh, that would be grand!” cried the girl.

“What would you wish for, Robina?”

“For this,” said the girl, clasping her hands and speaking so earnestly that the tears swam in her big grey eyes. “I should wish, Cousin Ferd, that all the homeless, the poor and the hungry might have comfortable homes and plenty to eat.”

“That sounds just like you, dear. But now tell me just a wish for yourself; what would it be?”

“Oh, I have all that I want, Ferd, and more, much more, than I deserve. What would you desire, cousin?”

“Shall I tell you, child? Well, I will. I should give my enchanted ring a twist like this”—he took Robina’s slender hand in his arm and twirled a sparkling ring she wore—“and I should wish for a fairy—”

“All for yourself?”

“Please do not interrupt. Yes, all for myself—a fireside fairy. I should name my lovely fairy heartsease, and whenever I seated myself at my fireside my fairy would be close at hand to cheer

and comfort me. Why, the mere sight of that fairy's small face would fill me with gladness, Robina."

"That's a very sensible wish," said Robina, "but you speak as though you were often sad and needed cheering. Yet you seem to me always very merry, Cousin Ferd."

"Do I seem so to you? I don't suppose you ever saw me lonely, and I—but there! of course I'm merry, dear child? Why should I not be?"

His tone made Robina look up at him with her clear, childish eyes; she wondered if the twilight was responsible for her cousin's mood.

"And you'll make Miss Vincent have a delightful time this evening?"

"If she is such a belle, she is sure to have a delightful time in any case, little cousin."

"But you must help to make it so—she will like that. Three long hours before the first guest arrives! A lifetime to wait!" cried the girl with a sweet, impatient sigh.

"For whom?"

"For them all! For the dances." And springing up, the girl crossed the room to the fireside.

"The large round logs made crackling mirth,
Their leaping flames
In every shape fantastic came."

It was a sweet face that the firelight, dancing high, lit up—thus thought Darrell—the face of

his heart's first love. He was not a very young man ; others had proved powerless to attract him ; Robina was the one woman in all the wide world to him. He stood near, watching her with repressed emotion, and as the girl met those brown eyes fixed upon her so earnestly, a vivid blush crept over her fair cheek, and a strange, new shyness seized upon her.

It was very still in the firelit room, save when the fierce, blustering wind drove the snow sharply against the window-pane. A spell seemed to have fallen upon the two. The frank, unstudied talk ceased. A silence sweet and eloquent took its place.

An open piano stood near. Obeying a sudden strong impulse, Darrell seated himself at the instrument. He did not sing, but as his fingers wandered over the keys softest music floated through the room, music fraught with plaintive, intense sweetness. Robina Arden was strangely touched. She did not know how anxiously the brown eyes were watching her, as the musician sat quite in the shadow, while the leaping firelight showed every varying expression in her own dreamy face. The great grey eyes were full of tears, and Miss Arden's color came and went with painful suddenness. The music was telling Robina of an undying love, steadfast as the stars.

She felt that another moment must find her

sobbing and in tears. Then a merry party came through the hall, and Robina's elder sister entered the room with several friends who were visiting the Ardens. A merry chattering group gathered about the fireside. Robina was rather silent; for the first time in her life she hesitated to address Cousin Ferd directly; a constraint had seized upon her that she could not shake off; she was wonderfully shy of meeting those brown eyes, but happier than ever before.

That evening the Ardens' fine suburban residence presented a brilliant appearance. Miss Vincent proved quite as charming as Robina had described her, and was strikingly fine looking in an imported gown of heliotrope crape. Darrell was duly presented to her by Mrs. Arden, but managed to procure some very delightful dances with his cousin.

Robina Arden had never looked as lovely as at that winter evening dance. Her cheeks wore a soft blush, and the deep grey eyes were shyly happy. Robina herself would have felt puzzled to tell why the world suddenly seemed such an enchanted place to live in.

Arthur Vincent was there; Darrell stood in the doorway, watching the young man as he led Robina through the crowded rooms in an inspiring waltz, when a voice at his side said,—

“Not dancing? How is that?”

He turned and found himself near Doctor Grayson. As the young man was a particular favorite of the good little physician's, a pleasant chat followed. Chancing to notice Robina Arden in the throng, Doctor Grayson remarked,—

There's a girl I love as though she were my own child. Did you ever look upon a face of such unmingled sweetness? She came to me one day, a few weeks ago, and said 'Doctor, I want to be of some use in the world. I want to make someone happier because I am here.' 'We are all happier because you are here,' I replied. 'We took a liking to your sunny face even when you were a tiny child.' 'But I want to do something—help somebody, you know. I hear that some of your patients are very poor; perhaps I could help them—I could make warm frocks for the little children.' Well, nothing would do but I must make out a list of those she might visit. I made it as short as I could, not wishing to bring a weight of care on her young shoulders. I believe the sight of her bright, cheery face has done them more good than all my medicine; they need sunshine; Robina seems able to furnish it to them." And warm-hearted Doctor Grayson's blue eyes were strangely misty for a few minutes.

Then some one carried him off, and Robina, passing near Ferd Darrell just then, wondered at

his softened face and the admiring look he bestowed upon her.

Such a waltz as the two soon enjoyed together to the sweetest, saddest music ! It left Cousin Ferd a little pale, with a tender light in his handsome eyes. He led Robina out into the cool, broad hall ; they met and were greeted by many as they promenaded up and down, for both were favorites.

“ Are you tired, Robina ? ”

“ No, not a bit ! Has not this been a pleasant evening ? ”

“ Did you notice that one of your rosebuds decorated Vincent’s coat as he passed us just now ? ”

Oh, yes—he asked me for it.”

“ And you were willing to give it to him ? ”

“ He wanted it for a New Year’s gift—I gave it to him,” repeated the girl.

Darrell was a little pale ; the lines of a poem came to his memory ; he felt almost inclined to speak them :—

“ I have wearily wandered the world, and I feel
That the least of your lovely regards
Is worth all the world can afford,”

But he did not speak ; he led Robina to the conservatory. The girl felt vaguely troubled because she was sure something was troubling her cousin, and raised her lovely eyes to his, full of unconscious appeal. As Darrell met the gaze of

those soft, bright eyes his own filled with sudden tears, and he cried brokenly,—

“Robina, Robina, give me yourself ! That is the New Year’s gift I long for !”

He took one impetuous step toward her, with both arms stretched forward pleadingly.

Instantly Robina became overwhelmed with shyness. She made a pretty picture in her white dress and the crimson cheeks. Bewildered and half frightened she stood, not daring to raise her eyes, but something in the sweet downcast face gave Ferd courage enough to take her in his arms.

“Have I won her for my own at last, my sweet fireside fairy ?” Robina heard a deep tremulous voice exclaim.

Softly the plaintive notes of distant violins came floating toward them, while a marvellous peace rested upon two hearts who found their happiness that snowy winter evening.

THE END.

MY LITTLE NEIGHBOR.

MY LITTLE NEIGHBOR.



A STORMY November day. How steadily the rain fell and how the wind moaned. But anyone looking into our cheerful sitting-room must have forgotten the state of the weather, for a bright fire snapped and crackled in the grate, and Claire Wilson was seated on the hearth-rug just at my feet with a gray kitten in her arms.

Claire's happy face made sunshine all about. Her doll was sleeping upon my knee while I busily worked at a pink party dress for Miss Miriam Yellowtress ; quite a long name for a rather small doll ; it took Claire three days to think of it. You see Miss Miriam Yellowtress has been invited to a dolls' party, and so Claire, my little next door neighbor, had come in to talk it all over with me.

"And she shall wear her blue silk dress with the blue sash again," announced Claire, smoothing her doll's curls tenderly.

"She ought to have another party dress," I said, "How would pink silk do ?"

“Beautiful ! It would just suit her cheeks, Miss May,” cried Claire.

“Well, she shall have one of that color, then, and I’ll make it for her.”

“I ran away for the material, which Claire pronounced “just lovely.”

“It’s a piece of my dancing school dresses—I wore it when I was not much bigger than you are, Claire,” I said. “And now dolly must be measured.” And so she was, and the dress once fairly started, progressed rapidly.

Miss Miriam Yellowtress dozed before the fire, Claire hugged her kitten upon the hearth rug and chatted blithely to me as I rocked and hemmed and at length finished the simple trained skirt. Then the tiny waist was commenced, and Claire, growing restless, commenced dancing about the room and singing, or paused to lean against my chair, and bestow an earnest kiss upon my cheek.

“Shall I read you a story, Miss May ?” asked Claire.

“Yes, pet, do,” I said.

So she chose a book from the centre table and curled herself up on the rug at my feet again. Now Claire is six years old, and can read very well if she takes time to puzzle the long words out. This time she never seemed to notice whether the words were long or short. The title

of the book she held was "Longfellow's Poems," and this is Claire's story :

"Once there was a little girl who went to school every day, almost, but once in a while, when it stormed, her mamma would give her a holiday. She almost always spent the holiday with a young lady who lived next door to her. Claire—I mean the little girl—loved this young lady, oh, very, very much !"

Here Claire caught my hand and gave it a warm squeeze.

"A lovely bird sang all day long in the window of Miss May's sitting-room, and gold-fish swam forever in a globe. The flowers looked so pretty that grew in a long box in the window. Once I carried a bunch home that Miss May had given me, and they were so sweet every one wanted to know where they came from, and I told them, and Uncle Wilbur took one and gave me a large orange for it."

"Now, Claire," I cried, "you are just making that up !"

"No, its all true—it's a true story," said Claire, earnestly ; then she said, "There's a nice kitty at Miss May's ; it will come to me when I call it, it hasn't any name but kitty. I think it ought to have a name besides that."

"You can give it one now, if you want to," I said.

“Oh, can I?” cried Claire, so joyously that any one might have fancied I had just made her a present of a hundred dollars. “Well, would Minnie do for a name? No—it would take too long to call—something short. Let me see. Fan,—I don’t ’actly like that—oh I know! Let’s call her Pinky. Pinky, dear, cunning Pinky, look up!”

To Claire’s delight, the kitten raised her little gray head and looked up.

“She likes her name, she almost laughed, she’s so pleased!” cried Claire, excitedly.

Then after petting puss a few moments, she picked up her book and went on with her story :—

“Miss May and I go to the same church; she teaches me in Sunday School; there are four other girls in the class, and each one wants to sit by Miss May, so we have to take turns at it. Christmas, Miss May gave me a most beautiful book with a green and gold cover, and a picture with a shepherd holding a dear little lamb in his arms. I read the book Sundays. Then one day when I was up in Miss May’s room, she opened a drawer in her desk and gave me a lovely blue pencil. I often wear it around my neck by a ribbon. When it snows I go for a sleigh-ride with mamma. Papa said this morning it looked like snow; if it does, I’ll be glad! Uncle Wilbur has

a splendid horse that he calls Sultan ; sometimes he takes me out for a drive on his tall cart—he often takes Miss May out. My doll is going to a grand party next week ; she will wear a pink silk dress, and her first train—it's going to look beautiful, and after the party I'm going to tell Miss May all about it. Miss May is making the dress ; she is sitting near me and her cheeks are as red as roses. I think she sits too near the fire, for her cheeks are hardly ever so red."

"It is warm," murmured Miss May.

"Next summer we are going to have a cottage by the sea-shore. I shall dig with clam-shells in the sand most every day and build forts. Miss May isn't sewing now, she's rocking herself to and fro, and so I'll stop reading."

Then Claire and I proceeded to array Miss Miriam in the party dress that I had just completed ; it set off her blonde loveliness to perfection, and she looked so fascinating that we felt compelled to kiss her for being so pretty. Indeed Claire was so pleased that she clapped her hands with delight, and then pranced all around the room, finally springing into my arms and nearly smothering me with kisses.

Then Miss Yellowtress was taken into the next room to mamma. I could hear Claire's eager voice explaining and admiring it all, and mamma's comments ; and then back the little girl

came fluttering to my side like a bird. Miriam Yellowtress was laid upon the table, and then without so much as "by your leave" Claire sprang into my arms and dropped her golden head upon my shoulder.

"Now it's my turn, Miss Miriam Yellowtress has had you for a long time. Tell me a story, Miss May, please."

So I told her about the day the kitty was brought to my door in a little basket—a present from a cousin of mine who was going South for the winter. I told her how strange kitty felt at first, and mewed and mewed, and even scratched me when I took her up in my arms and tried to comfort her. But kitty and I were now the best of friends, and she had forgotten to feel lonely.

Then we went to the window and looked out at the rain. It dashed against the window pane, and the wind shook the trees until they swayed and bent before the blast, as though trembling and afraid of its fury. The sky was lowering; some of the clouds were of an inky blackness. We sat there until twilight came on, and still it rained.

"Don't you feel awful lonely, Miss May?" said Claire. "I do. I like to feel so sometimes."

"What a funny child you are!" I said, "How can you like to feel lonely, pet?"

“Well, solemn, then. Do tell me a ghost story, please.”

“Not I, sweetheart. Besides I don’t know one to tell, as I never read them. Take my advice, Claire—never listen to ghost stories ; you may laugh at them in broad daylight, but when you awake at night they seem very different.”

A storm of wind shook the casement ; hail was mingled with the rain. Then mamma entered the room and exclaimed,—

“Why, how dismal you both look sitting there in the dark with your arms around each other like the babes in the wood.”

The cheery voice broke the spell ; we left the storm to take care of itself. I lighted the lamp with its amber-tinted globe, stirred the fire till it snapped and blazed up cheerfully, drew the crimson curtains together, and all in a moment our dusky room was transformed. How deliciously comfortable it seemed ! Claire and I had a merry time—a gay good time—until some one came to take my little friend away from me.

“And the doll’s party ? Oh, it was a grand success, and, best of all, Miss Yellowtress was the belle of the ball.”

THE END.

SOMEBODY'S SUNBEAM.

SOMEBODY'S SUNBEAM.



“MOTHER, every one believed that father was a wealthy man, and I confess I shared the belief,” said Edgar Ormsby, speaking thoughtfully. “But now that we have paid doctor’s bills and funeral expenses, and calculated everything up, the sum that remains is small.”

“Edgar, the last year was a very trying one for your father,” returned the widow, with tears in her eyes. “He suffered greatly from the heavy failures of other firms.”

Both were silent for a few minutes, then the lady continued,—

“I think I read your thoughts, dear ; we must remove to a smaller house. We cannot afford to remain here.”

With one impulse mother and son glanced regretfully at the young girl who, large eyed and attentive, had listened with absorbed interest to the conversation. She read the look, and cried impulsively, as she slipped to her mother’s side and gave her a warm embrace and a kiss,—

“Do not mind on my account ; at least we

have one another ; nothing can matter much as long as we are not separated !”

“ Good for you, little sister,” said the young fellow. “ That was well said ! We’ll keep together, whatever happens. But now, mother,” he added with more courage, “ of course I must leave college ; I intend to seek for a situation.”

“ My dear boy, finish out your year ; I insist upon that.”

“ Indeed, mother, I could not think of such a thing. It would be painful to me, when I knew that you and Claire were depriving yourselves of luxuries for my sake.”

“ We can live very comfortably in a small house just out of town,” said Mrs. Ormsby.

A servant entered with a card. Edgar glanced at it, and then went into the adjoining room, returning with a young man, tall and broad-shouldered, with a dark and agreeable face. Claire was still perched upon the arm of her mother’s chair.

“ Mrs. Ormsby,” said the young man, advancing and shaking hands with both ladies, “ I called to ask if I might be of any service to you. I know from sad experience that there are many things to be thought of in settling up an estate.”

“ Thank you very much, Mr. Gerold,” said the lady, speaking thoughtfully. “ Give your friend a seat, Edgar. We think of leaving the city ;

perhaps you can tell us of a small house, not far away."

The young man folded his arms across his broad chest as if to shut in the pain these words occasioned him. He looked half wistfully at Claire ; she was such a little thing in her black dress.

"Let me think," he said in a steady voice. "A house not far from the city?"

"With a garden !" pursued Claire, eagerly.

"With a garden," repeated he, smiling in a novel fashion at her. "I will give the matter earnest consideration."

"The fact is," said Edgar, turning to his friend, "my father lost heavily through many recent failures."

"These are trying times. We are all somewhat affected by them," replied Godfrey Gerold.

"I have decided to leave college and seek for a situation," continued Edgar.

His friend bit his lips but replied quietly,—

"I think we have just the place for you in our office, Ormsby ; you could fill the vacancy very satisfactorily."

"Ah, that is most fortunate ! I hope I shall be able to obtain it," exclaimed the young fellow, brightening. He was cheered by the thought that he would have his friend with him. "After

all, as little Claire says, nothing matters much as long as we have one another."

"Did your sister say that! That was very sweet of her," exclaimed Godfrey, impulsively. "You are blessed in your home ties, my friend. I am all alone, you know."

His brown eyes grew rather wistful as he spoke. Claire's soft heart was filled with pity.

"You have many friends," she said to comfort him.

"Yes, I believe so ; but they cannot take the place of mother and sister." Then, changing his tone, he said, "Mrs. Ormsby, I'll not forget to look up a house for you—with a garden, Miss Claire."

He smiled, but could not forbear glancing around the beautiful and spacious room. How would the girl bear the change ?

It was with a very thoughtful brow that he left them. He had known the Ormsbys for over a year ; he had liked the family exceedingly, and could not connect the idea of poverty with them ; he could not endure to think that pretty Claire should ever have a wish ungratified. How like a lily she had looked in her sad-colored robes ; how brave she was, smiling, with eyes full of tears. He was a great deal touched.

How would she endure poverty ? He winced at the word in connection with this girl, whom he

had met nestling in rich furs in the winter, daintily clad in delicately tinted lace like robes in the summer. It seemed cruel ; his heart beat in strong protest that she must needs give up the pretty luxuries ; it pained him to think of it.

He called again the following evening and found Mrs. Ormsby and Claire alone. Edgar, they said, was not at home.

"Well, Mrs. Ormsby, I have heard of a house within a short distance from the city, and from all I can learn regarding it, it is desirable in many respects."

"And the terms ?" questioned the lady.

He mentioned them. Mrs. Ormsby's grave face brightened.

"That sounds satisfactory. Edgar must look at it," she said.

"I will leave directions for him," said Godfrey Gerold. "Miss Claire, it has a pretty garden, where roses bloom all summer."

"Delightful ! I have no doubt we shall be very contented there. You must come and see my roses, Mr. Gerold," said Claire.

He smiled.

"I certainly shall."

"The country will soon begin to look very attractive. I presume all the trees are bursting into bud ?"

"Claire does not know very much about the

country in spring and winter," observed her mother fondly.

"No, but I shall soon. I have no doubt each season has its attraction," she said, brightly.

"What a dear sunbeam she is!" mused Godfrey Gerold, warmed through and through by the little smile she gave him.

"I shall spend a great deal of time in my pretty garden," remarked Claire, thoughtfully.

"How do you know it is pretty?" asked Godfrey, smiling at her.

"You said so—and it must be if roses bloom there," nodding her head wisely.

"Ah—true."

"Father loved flowers," said Claire in a low tone, and turning her pretty head away so that the young man might not see the tears that stood in her blue eyes.

Godfrey was silent; in a moment she turned and said in her usual soft tones:—

"Mr. Gerold, are there any mountains near the house?"

The mother smiled, and said in tones of gentle reproof,—

"Claire, my child, Mr. Gerold has not seen the place, remember."

"But I happen to know the country around it Mrs. Ormsby," remarked the young man eagerly, anxious to shield her from even such slight re-

buke. "Miss Claire, it is quite a mountainous region, although so near the city, and, best of all it is a perfectly healthy place. I am very sure of that, Mrs. Ormsby."

"You are a good friend, Mr. Gerold," said the elder lady, gratefully, and at her words the young man flushed with pleasure, and his dark eyes sought Claire's.

She smiled, and nodded her charming head.

"A good friend," she echoed, softly.

Godfrey felt in a strangely happy frame of mind.

"And now," continued Mrs. Ormsby, with a look of care on her pleasant, refined face, "we must settle ourselves there as soon as possible. This house and the furniture must be sold. The house is very heavily mortgaged, Mr. Gerold, but the sum received for the furniture will be all our own."

"Little enough, too," thought Godfrey, painfully. "Furniture, however handsome, that has been used at all, seldom realizes much."

He was silent, his eyes fixed upon the cheerful grate fire.

Edgar entered, looking brighter than upon the previous evening. The young men grasped hands and were soon arranging a time when Edgar might apply for the vacant position. The following morning was fixed upon, and shortly

after, as other friends were announced, Godfrey took his leave.

Edgar's bright, attractive face, his business like fashion of answering the questions put him, the well known standing of the family, won him the coveted position, and the young men were delighted with the prospect of being so often together.

There was nothing of the shirk in Godfrey Gerold. Although he had inherited a goodly fortune from his father, he had lived long enough to realize the truth of Carlyle's words, "Labor is life." Idleness could never have satisfied Godfrey.

In course of time the beautiful house and furniture were sold, and the little family were soon established in their home in the country, after having convinced themselves that it was desirable. It was not large, but very complete ; the bow windows jutting out here and there gave it a picturesque appearance. The garden delighted Claire ; several immense bushes of lilacs were bursting into bloom, and it was well stocked with rose-bushes and other plants, which promised abundant bloom for the coming summer.

One warm afternoon late in the spring, as Claire was busy propping up a little bush, she heard the latch of the garden gate lifted. She turned and confronted Edgar, followed by Mr. Gerold.

Claire greeted the latter cordially, pulling off her gardening gloves and extending her hand.

Godfrey held it fast for a moment, saying,—

“It certainly is a pretty garden, Miss Claire.”

He was pleased to note the soft bloom that out-of-door occupation had brought to her round cheeks.

“I think so,” she replied. “Look at those lilac bushes ; I must pick you some flowers.”

Flitting over to a bush and selecting a full spray, she cut it carefully and gave it to the young man.

“Share it with me,” he said. “See, I will keep this little sprig for myself. Oblige me and wear the rest,” he said, as he fastened the flower on his coat.

Claire smiled and pinned the cluster on her black dress. It lent a pretty relief to the sombre robe.

“You look like spring now:” said Godfrey, smiling down into her sweet eyes : and thus decorated they followed Edgar into the house.

Gerold was thoroughly charmed with the aspect of the little home. Spring sunlight flooded the deep windows ; an air of comfort and refinement pervaded the place: a tinted lamp, a few rugs and some fine oil paintings made the home nest a most attractive one ; otherwise, it was very simple.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Godfrey, seating himself near a window that commanded a fine view of the mountains.

"We like it, don't we mother?" said Claire.

"Yes, darling, better than I supposed we should," replied the lady.

"We have the loveliest horse," said Claire, speaking with some animation. "I never became very much attached to our city horses, but Prince has such gentle eyes."

"You should ride horseback, Miss Claire. I remember it was a favorite exercise of yours in the city."

"I have my side-saddle here, but I do not know if Prince is a lady's horse."

"Try him and see—that is, I will, if you please. Is Prince in the stable?"

"Yes, and the saddle is up stairs."

"I will get it; I saw it hanging in the garret," said Edgar.

A few minutes later Godfrey Gerold might have been seen mounted upon Prince's back with a blanket pinned habit-fashion over his knees. He found to his satisfaction that the pretty horse was not excited or at all frisky.

"Your Prince is a good little fellow, Miss Claire, and evidently is accustomed to side-saddles," observed the young man, starting off in a trot.

Claire watched him with a flush of pleasure tinging her soft cheek. As Godfrey finally dismounted he was rewarded with such a happy smile, and Claire looked so winsome with her wavy hair and great, earnest eyes, that the young man followed her into the house with a quick heart-throb, and an unwonted flush crept into his dark cheek.

"Come up and see my books, Godfrey," said Edgar, and the two young men ran lightly up the stairs, and were so busily engaged in looking over the carefully chosen library that they scarcely heard the summons to supper.

The meal was a pleasant one. Youth is a happy time. Claire looked very lovely in her black dress and the lilacs. Mrs. Ormsby's gravity relaxed as she listened to the joyous chatter of the three light-hearted young people. The sweet May air floated through the window ; the twitter and chirps of sleepy birds going to their nests were heard ; a distant cow-bell tinkled ; it was an hour of restful happiness and peace. The noise and bustle of the great city seemed far, far away—they felt in a little world of their own.

Later dusk crept on, and finally the moon arose from behind the mountains. Now the lilac bushes seemed like huge bridal bouquets in the silvery light, while everywhere reigned that beautiful quiet. Somehow Godfrey Gerold found himself

thrilled and blissfully happy. The lamp was left unlit—the moonlight was too lovely to be slighted; it flooded the quaint, octagon-shaped room, it lingered lovingly upon Claire's up-turned face; conversation was fitful and delightful, as it is apt to be with congenial friends.

Godfrey went to his rest that night feeling forcibly that he was just beginning to learn to live; he was strangely soothed, and filled with delicious restfulness.

The next morning in the early sunshine Claire and her mother watched the two young men depart. Godfrey was told to repeat the visit often.

"I'll ride down on horseback some afternoon," he said, smiling, "if Edgar can let me know what time will please Miss Claire. You could send me word by him."

The girl's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"The country around us is very beautiful, I think," she remarked as they stepped out upon the veranda.

"It is beautiful just here; look at the lights on those mountains opposite," cried Gerold.

"A fair May morning, truly," returned Clare.

"And the air is very sweet from your lilac bushes. But, Edgar, time flies; we must leave this delightful place," and reluctantly he made his adieux.

One lovely afternoon Mrs. Ormsby waved a

farewell to a couple of equestrians. Claire looked very trim in her English habit of invisible green; the jockey cap was very becoming. In fact, the riders looked a well-matched couple, and were in a mood as gladsome as the day.

They started their horses off in a famous trot, and when they drew rein and allowed Prince and Hero to walk, they glanced at one another with a smile.

"That was pleasant, wasn't it?" cried Claire.

"And how does Prince go?"

"Just as nicely as can be!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad I came!"

"You should ride often. It is not the first time I have galloped over this road," pursued the young man. "It has long been a favorite ride of mine. And now let us have an exhilarating trot."

"Agreed!" And off they started, Claire's black pony keeping neck by neck with Godfrey's superb animal.

The girl rode fearlessly, and sat as straight as an arrow; a flush tinged her cheeks, the eyes were sparkling. The soft scented air blew against their cheeks, the landscape sped away behind. When they walked their horses again Claire exclaimed,—

"That was better than waltzing!"

"Almost as delightful as a waltz with you,"

qualified Gerold. "Do you remember our last dance together?"

Claire puckered her white brow and looked puzzled.

"Have you forgotten? Why, I remember the very dress you had on; it was baby blue, and you wore forget-me-nots in your brown hair. The music was 'My Queen' waltz."

"I remember it now—you have an excellent memory. Ah, how little I thought then—"

She stopped abruptly; the sweet voice faltered; she turned away her head, and Godfrey was sure there were tears in her eyes.

"Forgive me!" he exclaimed. "I was thoughtless. I have stirred sad and painful memories. Tell me you forgive me," placing his hand upon her horse's neck and speaking earnestly.

"I have nothing to forgive," said the girl, turning to him and smiling, although tears stood in her blue eyes.

"Little sunbeam!" thought Godfrey, tenderly. "She smiles to reassure one." And then, as he looked at her in all her youthful loveliness and grace,

"Love took up the harp of life and smote on all the chords
with might,
Smote the chord of Self that, trembling, passed in music
out of sight."

He knew that he loved Claire Ormsby well

and tenderly. And she? As yet it was plain to him she cherished for him but a friendly liking; time must accomplish the rest. Noticing his grave and quiet glance, that hid such a wealth of love and tenderness, Claire said gayly,—

“Of what are you thinking, Mr. Gerold?”

He regarded her silently for a moment, and then said with a gravity that well became him,—

“Shall I tell you, little Claire?”

The girl flushed slightly, although her look was frank.

“If you like,” she said, smoothing Prince’s brown mane with her gauntleted hand.

She looked so thoroughly unsuspecting that Godfrey said to change the subject,—

“Your horse is a pretty creature, Miss Claire.”

“And so kind,” she returned, flashing an animated smile up into the young man’s dark face. “I should feel very badly if anything happened to Prince. How prettily the trees arch just here.”

It was certainly a romantic road along which they walked their horses; the May sunshine fell in checkered patches through the overhanging branches, the lights and shades were bewildering. Occasionally a startled bird flew up from the thicket and soared heavenward; once they caught a glimpse of a pretty squirrel darting along the road-side. Now and then a country wagon passed

them, its occupants favoring the equestrians with a long stare of wonder or admiration; one or two wished them a civil "good-day."

"I enjoy living in the country," observed Clare, with a bright smile. "One can live so much out of doors amongst the birds and flowers, and next winter Edgar and I intend to skate upon the lake, and if there is snow, enjoy a great deal of sleighing."

"Both sports are healthy and highly enjoyable."

"And now let us trot," suggested Clare, and a good scamper they had "over the hills and far away." The roses in Claire's soft cheeks were beautiful to behold as they drew rein and again walked their horses.

"Oh, Mr. Gerold, what a lovely patch of buttercups," looking longingly at them.

"I will get them for you," said Godfrey, jumping off Hero and leading him by the bridle to the edge of the road.

He gathered a quantity, and at length brought them to Claire. All unconsciously they made a picture in the shaded country road, the tall athletic man in top boots and becoming riding costume, the fair girl, lissome and supple, bending to take the flowers with a pleased face.

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Gerold," she exclaimed, and busied herself in deftly arranging

them. Choosing a remarkably fine one, she handed it down to Godfrey.

"A reward for your courtesy, Sir Knight," she said, smiling into his dark, upturned face in a very friendly fashion.

With a half smile, half sigh, the young man took the flower. Clare fastened the rest in her habit ; they were rarely becoming.

"How simple and sweet they are !" she quietly remarked.

"I am partial to simple, sweet flowers," returned Godfrey, springing into the saddle, and thinking how like a flower the girl was herself ; and when she turned those soft childish eyes upon him and smiled for pure happiness and content, he felt a sudden longing to fold her in his arms and tell her of his love.

Another brisk trot. It gave Claire a pair of red cheeks ; a few soft locks of hair curled from under the velvet jockey cap.

"Heaven bless thee ! Thou hast the sweetest face I ever looked upon !" quoted the young man to himself.

The lengthening shadows warned them that they must turn their horses' heads homeward, returning another road. Meadows velvety with young grass stretched upon either side ; flocks of sheep were grazing, presenting a beautiful pastoral scene ; a shepherd's dog came leaping and

barking toward them, but soon returned to the care of his sheep. It was a happy time and far too short. Gerold lifted Claire from the saddle with a sigh, saying,—

“May I repeat the ride with you soon again.”

And Claire replied readily that he might.

But other friends were not long in finding the little family out, and it chanced that they were frequently joined by others in their rides. Clare's city admirers could not speedily forget her. It was difficult for Godfrey Gerold to meet her alone. Tennis, riding and walking parties were formed; the young people certainly seemed to appreciate out-of-door life.

One afternoon Claire Ormsby was seated upon the veranda, listening to a young man's interesting account of a trip he had taken to the Yosemite Valley, when Godfrey Gerold was seen coming up the road.

“There comes a friend of yours, Miss Claire,” observed the young man, noticing that her attention had wandered to the approaching Godfrey. “I presume you have heard the report that he is engaged to Miss Smythe, an heiress of our city.”

“I had not heard it,” replied Claire, speaking very quietly, and feeling half puzzled by the sudden pain tugging at her heart.

Ah! little Claire, it puzzled you that the sunshine should suddenly seem less brilliant, and that

you must force a smile in response to Godfrey Gerold's greeting.

It was new to Claire to assume a gayety she did not feel, but she succeeded remarkably well, although when both guests had departed she stood for a moment pale and silent. The smile with which she greeted Edgar a few minutes later was rather wistful, perhaps, but she was soon chatting quite busily.

And so time went, and Godfrey at length became conscious that little Claire skillfully managed that there should always be a third member to their little party. He decided that he must and would have a chance to tell his love soon.

Fortune favored him at last. One afternoon he found Claire seated alone upon the veranda, looking very lovely in a simple white dress and broad black sash. She greeted him cordially, and then turned from him saying,—

“I will tell mamma that you are here.”

“But no, please,” he replied, keeping fast hold of her hand. “I want you all to myself to-day. Will you walk with me down the lane?”

Claire fixed a great wistful, earnest pair of eyes upon his face, and hesitated.

“Come,” he said, picking up her hat. “There is a lovely breeze stirring among those trees.”

The voice was persuasive, and gravely Claire followed him.

“Claire how you have avoided me of late !”
She fluttered like a timid bird, and cried,—
“You must not call me Claire ; it is not right.”
Her lip quivered, and there were tears in her eyes.

“But I love you ! There ! it is told at last.”
“But you are engaged to Florence Smythe.”
“Who said that ?” he cried. “It is false ; there is no foundation for such a report.”

And Claire looked up, to meet such a glance from those dark eyes that she read his love—happy Claire ! Her sweet eyes fell. Godfrey drew her close to his heart.

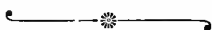
“I love you, Claire,” he whispered, “and do you love me ?”

A little nod of the bright brown head answered that, and the bees and the butterflies flitted around two happy lovers, standing in the sunshine, clasped in a fond embrace.”

THE END.

SNOW IN THE COUNTRY.

SNOW IN THE COUNTRY.



ONE bright, cold morning, a small bird looked out of its nest to find a world carpeted with snow, even the bough from which his little home was suspended had received its share of flakes. As the sun shone down, our tiny friend's newly awakened eyes were quite dazzled by the brilliancy of it all. Giving himself a little shake and flutter, he hopped from the nest with a blithe, cheery chirp that might have been taken for a general "good morning."

It was certainly bitterly cold, but the little bird never thought of complaining about that. He arranged his brown feathers and then took a more minute survey of the world in general. I think he was proud of the grand mountains and the lofty trees, and I think he rejoiced in the blue sky and the sunshine. Then, spreading his wings, off he floated through the chill morning air. He met several friends; they exchanged greetings; what a cheerful chirping and twittering there was, to be sure, and how distinctly their chattering might be heard as it fell upon the stillness of the woods!

But the morning flight had given our little friend a fine appetite. Fortunately, he knew where to go when hungry, for without the slightest hesitation he spread his wings again, and came along until a pretty cottage came in view. The snow upon the slanting roof was a sight to admire; it was unbroken by a single furrow, and the tops of the bay windows were decorated in the same fashion.

Snow-Bird did not pause until he had landed upon a window-sill; then he peeped through the window. I don't believe he noticed the pretty room with the cheerful fire sending forth a welcome glow. I think he had eyes for only his friend, seated at the breakfast table, a little girl with long sunny curls and bright eyes, just like yours, dear child.

Then this darling little bird ventured to tap upon the window pane with his bill; the sound was unheeded, and although he repeated the experiment, Sunny Locks did not turn her head, as birdie hopped about and then peeped rather restlessly in at the window again. This time his friend must have seen him, for jumping down from her chair she ran to the window so hastily that our snow-bird was a little startled, and fluttered to a neighboring tree.

Golden Locks was so much interested in looking at the snow-covered country that she seemed

to forget the little anxious and hungry bird. She could catch a glimpse of the lake; it was frozen and covered with snow; there would be coasting and sleighing, and thoughts of that made Daisy jump up and down in great glee.

Snow-Bird did not wish her to leave the window without seeing him, so he flitted down from the twig, and hopped about and glanced about and almost told Daisy that he was hungry. Other friends joined him, and then Sunny Locks vanished from the window as suddenly as she had appeared there. But she returned in a minute with—oh, welcome sight!—a handful of bread. She broke it into crumbs, and opening the window a little distance, tossed the much needed breakfast to the waiting group outside.

How eagerly they fell to work—how glad they seemed, and how thankful, too! A merrier crowd you could not find, and all made so comfortable and contented by a little piece of bread that had been left upon Daisy's plate, and that might easily have been carried away to the kitchen without doing any good at all.

Snow-Bird felt splendidly after his breakfast, and after one grateful glance toward his generous friend at the window, off he darted, carrying with him a good sized piece of bread for Mrs. Snow-Bird and the little ones. You may know that they were glad enough to get it.

Dear children, never forget the birds, they live out of doors, and the keen fresh air makes them hungry.

Daisy had commenced the day well; she had been doing good; now let us see what else she did with herself.

Breakfast being over, Golden Locks knelt upon a chair and looked out of a window at the opposite end of the room from the one at which she had fed her friends. Brother Hal was shoveling a path to the gate; he was tall and strong, and twelve years old. Daisy wished she could lift a great load of snow and toss it aside as easily as Hal did. Then the exercise had given him such a pair of red cheeks! Evidently he was having great sport. Daisy jumped down from her chair and ran to mamma.

"Oh, mamma," she cried eagerly, "let me go out in the snow! It's lovely out there!"

"Not yet, child; the snow is far too deep; wait until Brother Hal has shoveled a path."

"May I take my sled, then?"

"Yes, but don't go near the deep snow, or we should lose you, I fear."

Daisy promised that she wouldn't, and then ran to the window again, watching eagerly to see how rapidly Hal's work was progressing. She wondered if he would help her make a snow man by-and-by; they would stand him at the gate, as

though he were looking down the road. Daisy wondered if the birds would mistake him for a real man, just as they did the scarecrow last summer. Then down she jumped from the window again and flew eagerly to mamma.

"Oh, mamma, may I sweep the snow off the window sill? I'll be very careful not to let any fall upon the carpet."

"Well, I suppose you may," replied mamma.

But first she bundled Daisy up in a great gray shawl—it protected her sunny head, too. I wish you could have seen her. Hal called her "Little Gray Riding Hood" as she appeared at the window. Daisy was happy. She swept the snow away very neatly with her little broom. She was almost sorry when the task was over, it was such nice, dry snow. She shut the window, and I think you would have called her manner of divesting herself of her gray shawl original; she danced out of it. She found what a large shawl it was when she tried to fold it.

Whenever the wind blew the branches of the trees about a shower of snow fell to the ground; once the air was so full of flakes that Daisy thought it must be storming again.

If you had stood at the window by Sunny Locks' side you would have seen what resembled nothing so much as a dried up stick, sprinkled with snow, standing upright in the ground; but

Daisy could have told you that it was a rose bush that would bear luxuriant bloom in the coming summer, making the air about heavy with fragrance. The skeleton bush beyond was the snowy syringa which would present a most beauteous appearance when summer's warmth had nourished it to its full dower of loveliness. The honey-suckle presented a brown and forlorn appearance as it clung to the piazza rail. Humming-birds would delight to visit it when long, chill winter and the spring had slipped away.

Brother Hal was an industrious fellow ; he soon made quite a road through the snow.

"When he reaches the gate I'll ask mamma if I can take my sled out," thought Daisy, rocking her doll to sleep.

Nanette she called the dolly ; her eyes were as black as sloes, and her hair was curly, like Daisy's, only not half so pretty or soft. She wore a warm blue frock trimmed with black braid, and beside that she had a trunkful of pretty dresses up-stairs ; why, she had almost as many frocks as Daisy had.

Mamma was met a little later by a very eager little girl.

"I can go out now, mamma—oh, do say yes, please ! There's such a nice path for my sled ! I'll draw Nanette up and down until Hal can take me for a ride."

“Well, run along, then,” said mamma. “Tell Sister Fan to wrap you up in your fur-trimmed coat with the hood.”

Daisy liked that blue coat. She danced away, and when all wrapped up it occurred to her that Sister Fan deserved thanks for her kind assistance. Sunny Locks gave her a warm kiss and embrace. A moment later Daisy might have been seen emerging from the house with a happy face. She trotted up and down the path, with Nanette upon the sled, until the little girl's eyes were as bright as stars and her cheeks as rosy as Hal's were.

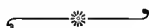
But oh ! it was happiness when a little later Daisy found herself seated upon the sled, and, holding tightly to either side, was soon skimming away at an exciting pace with Hal for steed.

How the wind, keen and sharp, cut against her face ! How lightly, how merrily, how smoothly the small sled slipped along ! What an appetite Golden Locks brought home with her ! And when bedtime came it was a very sleepy, happy child who took a farewell look out of the window at the snow-clad hills glistening so white in the moonlight.

THE END.

HIS FIRST, LAST LOVE.

HIS FIRST, LAST LOVE.



“WELCOME home, Rodney !” “Thanks, dear mother ! It seems very pleasant to be under one’s own roof-tree again,” replied the young man addressed, glancing appreciatively around the beautiful and home-like rooms, while a look of satisfaction stole over his bronzed face. Then he turned to the lady again. “And it seems to me you grow younger every year, mother,” he said.

“The time has slipped away very quickly. You remember I wrote you two years ago, shortly after your departure for Europe, that my old friend, Mrs. Fletcher, died, leaving as my ward her daughter, then a girl of about fifteen ; she has been with me ever since,” said Mrs. Morton.

“You placed her at school, I suppose ?” remarked Rodney.

“No, I engaged a governess, and masters instruct her in music and the languages.”

“My dear mother ! What a world of care you have taken upon yourself ! Now I propose that you place the young lady at a first-rate board-

ing school. The plan has proved a decided success with Aunt Edith's daughters."

"I could not send her away from me," returned the lady, with gentle decision. "I love her altogether too well."

"My dear mother !" exclaimed the young man again, impetuously. "You are always ready to sacrifice yourself, but this is nonsense. I insist that the care should be removed from your shoulders for at least a year or two. Pray send her to a good school."

The lady smiled.

"She would die of home-sickness, Rodney."

"She would meet with girls of her own age, and enjoy their companionship," asserted Morton, emphatically. "These schools bring together a number of bright, intelligent girls. I believe she would be very happy and contented there ; my cousins were."

"Well, we will talk of it again," said the lady.

A knock was heard at the door, and a servant entered.

"The singing teacher for Miss Elsie, ma'am."

"Very well ; she is in the sitting-room, reading," replied Mrs. Morton.

"I could not find her, ma'am."

"That is singular ; she knows this is the hour for the singing-lesson ; I will look for her myself," said the lady, starting up.

“This is too much !” thought Rodney. “My mother at the beck and call of a careless school-girl !” He frowned, and his cheek flushed with annoyance ; he was very proud and fond of his mother. “I am convinced that a strict school would do Miss Wilfulness all the good in the world. She would meet young ladies there whose acquaintance it would be pleasant for her to retain. If she is bright and attractive, she will doubtless some day meet a sensible and perhaps wealthy fellow, and mother can congratulate herself that she has fulfilled her trust nobly and satisfactorily.”

He sauntered out of the room, along the hall, passing the music room, where an impatient Italian professor stood nervously pulling his long moustache. The reception-room looked inviting. Rodney went to the fire, and suddenly became aware that the apartment was not uninhabited. The huge chairback had concealed its little occupant from view. She was sound asleep. Rodney gazed at the young girl in surprise.

“Whom have we here ?” murmured he, surveying her with a look of profound admiration. “A little princess !”

She was certainly worthy of the remark ; her dress of dark velvet was quaint in its design, setting off perfectly her fair, rather childish face, with its rippling brown hair ; the eyelashes that

rested against her round cheek were dark, and very long. She had curled herself up in the great chair like a tired child. Mrs. Morton entered the room ; Rodney turned to her with a new expression of tenderness in his fine eyes.

“Who is she, mother !” he said. “Step softly—she is asleep.”

“Elsie, child, wake up, dear ! Your singing master is here,” said the lady, giving the girl a gentle touch on the arm.

“Mother, is this young lady your ward ?”

“Certainly. Whom did you suppose she was, Rodney ?”

Rodney blushed deeply ; he thought of all he had said, and bit his lip ; without a word he turned and made his escape from the room, not, however, before he caught a glimpse of a pair of wide brown eyes fixed wonderingly upon him, sleepy eyes, not half awake—very charming eyes.

He reached his own room, and sat down to meditate.

“What have I been saying to mother ?” exclaimed he. “Send that child to boarding-school, among a lot of pert, saucy girls !”

Then a very troublesome idea occurred to him ; what if his mother had been influenced by his forcible remarks ? What if she decided,

after all, to consign the little princess to a 'first-rate boarding-school'?

Rodney sprang up and walked restlessly to the window, from whence he heard the sound of a fresh young voice, practising scales and exercises over and over again.

"Poor little girl! What tedious work! She has a voice that lends a charm to exercises, even."

Shortly the round young voice was joined by a man's, full, deep and rich. Rodney started.

"Confound it! The professor, I suppose," said he, restlessly.

He ran down-stairs and found his mother in the drawing room. The door of the music-room was partly open; he caught a glimpse of Elsie standing by the piano, the professor playing the accompaniment, a rather prim governess seated in the window, knitting.

"Rodney, you look more like your old self," said his mother.

Rodney fixed a pair of rather dreamy gray eyes upon the fire; he was strangely silent; his mother glanced at him with secret pride. What a manly fellow he was—lithe and strong, self-reliant and rather masterful. The grave and gentle expression he had assumed became him well.

"Mother!" he said at length.

"Well, Rodney?"

"Your ward is not like ordinary girls."

"No, Rodney, she is not. Do you still think she could be happy in a boarding-school?"

"No, mother! you were right," he said. "I acknowledge that."

"I will not send her away from me," returned the lady, gently, "until I must, when some golden-haired prince carries her off, as I suppose one will, some day."

Rodney pulled his moustache meditatively.

"Has she met many of your friends, mother?" he inquired.

He tried to speak quietly.

"No—but she must soon. I fear she leads rather a lonely life, although she seems very happy."

"She has a charming face," he remarked, thoughtfully.

"And a charming disposition, although she does not lack spirit," said the lady, working away busily at the screen she was embroidering. "When she has completed her studies, I intend to introduce her formally to my friends. She is an accomplished little creature. Her music-master expresses himself delighted with her, and he is very slow to give praise."

A light footstep was heard in the hall.

"Where are you, auntie dear?" queried a soft voice, and Elsie Fletcher entered the room.

The girl started as her eye fell upon Rodney, who had risen ; a faint flush tinged her cheek, but her frank brown eyes regarded the young man with shy curiosity,

“Elsie darling,” said the lady, “this is my son Rodney, home again at last.”

“Welcome home !” she said, extending a dimpled hand.

Rodney bowed over it, thinking he had never looked upon a fairer, more flower-like face than Elsie Fletcher’s. Seating herself upon a low cushion at Mrs. Morton’s feet, the young girl gazed into the fire, feeling rather shy, and conscious that Rodney’s gray eyes were regarding her. Gently Mrs. Morton stroked the soft brown hair.

“Elsie, what do you suppose this young gentleman suggested that I should do ?”

The girl looked up into Mrs. Morton’s face in a pretty, puzzled fashion.

“That I should place you at boarding-school ; he thinks you would feel happier there, amongst others of your own age,” earnestly regarding the girl.

“Mother !” exclaimed the young man, beseechingly. It would have been difficult to describe his feelings as Elsie’s lovely, childish face was turned upon him, full of wonder and dismay.

"Miss Fletcher, believe me, I did not know what I was saying, for I had not seen you then."

The girl cast one grieved look up into Rodney's gray eyes, a look full of reproach.

"I had thought you would be my friend," she said. "I am disappointed in you."

If she had known half the pain these words had occasioned the young man, her soft heart would have ached for him.

"Miss Elsie forgive me. I'll go to boarding-school myself rather than send you away," with a laughing flash in his eyes.

Elsie burst into a gleeful laugh, and placed her hand in his.

"Thank you," he said, carrying the slim hand to his lips. "We will be friends ; is it not so ?"

"Oh, yes, let us be friends," agreed Elsie, softly ; and then her eyes turned to the fire, and a shyness stole over her. She sat still as a mouse, her brown head resting against Mrs. Morton's knee, looking so thoroughly lovable that Rodney did not wonder that his mother should stroke the pretty head that rested contentedly against her.

By-and-by she went to the heavily curtained window, looking out upon the deepening twilight. Rodney soon crossed the room and stood by her side.

"It is growing dark," she said. "The twi-

light hour sometimes makes me feel a little sad."

"You are very impressionable, are you not?" glancing down at her somewhat tenderly.

"Perhaps," looking off into space with lovely, thoughtful eyes. "Don't you love to watch the lamp-lighter? I do," continued the girl. "He always seems to me such a lonely, mysterious being. I never imagine he is seen in the full glare of day-light, but every evening he can be seen coming down the street. There he is now—quite an old man to brave snow and hail and rain. I am glad this evening is such a fine one for his task," in a voice of sweet pity, and watching him with dreamy eyes.

"Perhaps he works cheerfully all day long at a trade; he looks robust, although his hair is so white."

"Please do not spoil my fancy; he does not work all day long," half petulantly. "He is a mysterious personage, who springs out of the ground at dusk; they all do; for who ever heard of a lamplighter who died or married like other people?"

Rodney smiled at the earnest, upturned face of the young girl.

A young man came rapidly along; he glanced up at the window expectantly, and bit his lip as his eye fell upon Rodney. Elsie had drawn back into the shadow.

“And is that your blond prince, Miss Elsie?” questioned Rodney, striving to speak lightly.

“My prince?” she said, with a blush. “No, indeed! I haven’t any prince. That is a neighbor—he passes the house every evening.”

“And you watch for him?”

He was surprised at his own stern voice, and hated himself for having asked the question as soon as he had spoken.

“I do not!” very indignantly, adding with pretty disdain, “I would not do that—how could you think it?” glancing up with a pair of lovely offended eyes.

“Forgive me,” said Rodney, for the second time, and gentle Elsie smiled a pardon.

“Rodney,” said his mother, from her seat by the fire, “have you forgotten your old habit of singing to me just at dusk?”

“No, mother, I have not forgotten.”

“Sing something now, please,” urged Elsie, in pleading tone.

“What shall it be—a German song?”

“Oh, yes!” eagerly.

He went to the piano, and after striking a few rich chords, commenced the song in a clear, mellow voice. The melody was sweet; its tenderness touched the young girl.

“What is it?” she questioned, when he had finished.

"A simple little love-song," he replied, smiling at her. "The German students often sing it as a serenade."

From the song he glided into light and graceful snatches from operas, and finally the delicious strains of a most inspiring waltz floated through the dim room. Lightly the young girl sprang to her feet, lightly she danced, flitting around like a fairy in the fire-lit room, sinking at last into her old cosy chair, laughing and breathless.

"Thank you for a lovely dance," she exclaimed enthusiastically.

"And thank you for your lovely dancing," replied Rodney. "I wish you were a wave of the sea, that you might ever do nothing but that."

A sweet-voiced bell announced the dinner-hour ; the meal that followed was spiced with merry repartee and happy laughter. Then came music again, and reading and chat ; and when the party separated Rodney was infatuated with his mother's little ward.

Winter melted into spring ; summer came. Rodney confided in his mother ; he told her he had learned to love her ward, but both agreed that it would not be just to speak of it until Elsie had seen other men.

He crossed the Atlantic and remained away until late in the fall. The following winter, Elsie

Fletcher, having completed her studies, entered society. Her sweet face won her friends and admirers. Rodney's protecting care of her was pretty to see, although he did not render it conspicuous.

Mrs. Morton was the only person who dreamed that the young man felt anything more than a friendly interest in the lovely girl. In the ball room, it was a hard trial for him to watch Elsie floating away from him in another's arms ; he almost wished she had never learned to dance.

One brilliant afternoon Rodney entered the room where Mrs. Rodney was busy with a bit of fancy work. Elsie was curled up in a huge chair, reading.

"Put away your book, Elsie ; the sleigh will be at the door presently ; will you go with me for a little drive ?"

"I should dearly love to go !" jumping up, while the color deepened in her cheeks, and pleasure beamed from her brown eyes. "May I, auntie dear ?" pleadingly.

"Yes ; it would do you good, child."

"Pray wrap up warmly ; it is so intensely cold," advised Rodney, smiling at her.

"I will. I am not afraid of the weather," dancing out of the room.

"Mother," said the young man, seating himself, and speaking so gravely that the lady drop-

ped her work and looked at him, “‘confidence is the companion of success.’ I feel strangely in need of confidence to-day, for I have resolved to tell Elsie of my love for her.”

“Rodney, I wish you success with all my heart,” said his mother, coloring with emotion.

“Thanks, mother. Do you think she cares for any one of the young men who dangle around her?” anxiously.

“Two or three are decidedly eligible. Elsie would never think of that, however. I cannot be sure, of course, but she does not appear particularly interested in any one of them.”

Rodney heaved a sigh of relief, then he said in a troubled tone,—

“Mother, young Geroldson is attracted by her; he is considered the most eligible bachelor in the city; did you notice how he followed her with his eyes when I led her off in a waltz?”

“Nonsense! I only noticed the adorable smile she gave you as you spoke to her, my boy,” replied the lady, lightly, hardly recognizing her confident son in his present anxious mood.

The door opened and Elsie appeared, clad completely in sealskin. The rich dark fur heightened her graceful loveliness; like a picture she stood, regarding the two with a smile. The careworn expression left the young man’s pleasant face; his heart throbbed as he looked at her.

"I am all ready," said the sweet, bird-like voice, "and the sleigh is at the door, Rodney."

Mrs. Morton waved an adieu to the two as they sped off.

"Success to you, my boy!" murmured she, thinking what a splendidly matched couple they were.

Jingle, jingle went the merry bells, smoothly the pretty sleigh slipped along.

"No cloud above, no earth below,
A universe of sky and snow!"

"What a beautiful world this is!" exclaimed Elsie, drawing a deep breath of pleasure.

Rodney silently agreed with her as he glanced at the pure face beside him; it had seemed a beautiful world to him since he had known that it held Elsie Fletcher.

"How brilliant the sun shines!" pursued the girl. "Did you ever go sleighing on a finer day?"

"Never, indeed!" agreed Rodney.

They entered the park, where

"Every pine, and fir, and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl."

Look at those poor little birds; I should think they would freeze on that icy twig," remarked Elsie.

"Sparrows and robins are hardy creatures,"

returned Rodney smiling. "They do not mind the cold."

"Dear, tiny things !" said the girl, with ready tenderness.

How lovely she was ! There was a soft charm in her manner that entirely captivated Rodney. Was she at all conscious of the power she possessed to win love and admiration ? No—the face was that of a joyous child. He longed exceedingly to clasp her in his arms ; he was so anxious to know his fate that his tongue was tied ; his feelings were not easily put into words.

Half impatient with himself, he gave one of his horses an irritable touch of the whip. The spirited creature gave a bound that caused Elsie to grasp the young man's arm in alarm. She was laughing at her fears a moment later ; she had unbounded faith in Rodney ; he looked to her the embodiment of power ; the fresh young horses were very docile under his steady hand.

"The cold has given you a rosy pair of cheeks," remarked Rodney, smilingly.

Noticing that she bowed to some one, he turned and lifted his cap to Mrs. Geroldson and her son. After a pause, he continued,—

"Are those roses entirely due to the bracing air, Elsie ?"

Elsie smiled and answered,—

"Yes, of course they are. What handsome

creatures your horses are ! I prefer Hero, though."

"See how he arches his neck, as if proud of the compliment," pointing with his whip to the beautiful animal.

Elsie laughed at the fancy. They greeted many friends. It was wonderful to note the genial approving glances and smiles that were unanimously showered upon Elsie Fletcher ; the coldest face softened at the sight of so much beauty and innocent happiness.

A stray lock of hair curled over her brow ; to arrange it, Elsie drew off the little sealskin mitten ; something flashed upon her slender finger ; with a throb of keenest pain Rodney's eyes fell upon a clear and beautiful diamond—an engagement ring. He was too late !

He could not speak at first. Elsie was just about to draw on her mitten when he stopped her with the exclamation,—

"The ring—I had not seen it before."

Was that far away voice his ? It was well she did not see his face.

"It was my mother's. I sometimes look at it. To-day I thought I would wear it," said the girl, softly.

The warm tide of life that had seemed for a moment chilled and frozen rushed back ; his cheeks were warm ; his eyes glowed and sparkled.

“Elsie,” he cried, “I love you, my darling !”

The girl’s eyes fell as if weighted ; intently she studied the fur robe, too shy to move or look up. The stars—“the forget-me-nots of the angels”—dotted the sky, the short winter day was merging into twilight. Again that deep, intense voice.

“I love you, Elsie ; won’t you love me a little, dear ?”

The small gloved hand somehow slipped into his. Elsie, with shy, sweet grace, said in the softest of voices,—

“Rodney, I do love you.”

“My darling !” There was a whole world of expression in the exclamation. “Would the world object if I kissed you now, Elsie ?” glancing at the approaching sleigh.

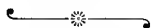
“Very, very much,” with extreme timidity.

“Then speed us home, Hector and Hero ! Your master is the happiest and most impatient man in the city.

THE END.

HUGH'S DESTINY

HUGH'S DESTINY.



THE room was a pleasant one, an open fire sending forth its ruddy glow. By the centre table a young man sat absorbed in reading ; upon the sofa another reclined, lost in a reverie, his blue eyes looking into space, his hands clasped behind his head. Judging from his expression, the thoughts must have been very pleasant ones ; but at length his eye fell upon his brother, the quiet reader by the lamp ; his look became thoughtful, and at length he exclaimed impulsively,—

“ Hugh, do you know that you are missing half your life in the dull routine you lead—close application to business all day long, and poring over books in the evening ? ”

The reader raised his gray eyes at the sudden exclamation, then he smiled as he answered quietly,—

“ I am satisfied with my life, Fred, and I think, my dear boy, you will find me happier than many who spend their evenings away from home. Do I look discontented ? ”

"Oh, you look contented enough, I suppose, but so does a settled man of forty or fifty, and you are not quite thirty, Hugh. Believe me, you miss a deal of pleasure by leading such a hermit's life."

"What do I miss? Can you offer me anything more attractive than this?" holding up a book by his favorite author. "It is both instructive and entertaining, and never wearies me, as society often did; and there"—waving his hand to the handsome, well-stocked bookcase—"there are more companions; they are always fresh and congenial. But, Fred, why argue? This seems our only bone of contention."

"Hugh," replied the other, suddenly, I wish to ask a favor of you."

"Well, out with it!" returned his brother, with a smile.

"Leave your reading for this evening, and go with me to Fannie's."

Fred's voice was most persuasive.

"To find myself one too many? My dear fellow, you must excuse me."

"Fan has a friend visiting her," continued the other. "Now if you were to engage her attention, at least Fan and I might stand a chance of holding pleasant confab together."

"My dear Fred, ask some of your many friends. I am in no mood to leave this interesting book,

beside, as you well know, being little versed in small talk." And half turning from the coaxing face of his younger brother, Hugh again settled himself to his reading.

A deep silence followed. It was at length broken by a heavy sigh. Hugh looked up to find Fred regarding him ruefully.

"Go with me, Hugh," he said persuasively.

"What ridiculous fancy is this? Well if I oblige you once, will you promise never again to make a like troublesome request?"

"I promise you," returned Fred, springing up with alacrity. "And now let us make haste. Fan must even now expect me."

A few minutes later, the brothers were out in the penetrating night air; snow and sleet fell in a driving fashion, causing Hugh to button his overcoat across his broad chest; then, turning up his collar, he buried his chin in it, while Fred followed his example.

"It's a disagreeable night. I fancy I can read your thoughts, Hugh; you are wishing yourself snug at home by the blazing fire," he said, slipping his hand in his brother's arm, and half wishing he had urged him not to come.

"I think I can afford to neglect my books for one evening," Hugh responded cheerfully, as a gust of wind almost took his hat off.

"The elements are against me," laughed Fred.

"Hugh, I sincerely wish that some day you may meet and fall in love with a pretty and sensible girl ; you are just the man to lead a happy domestic life."

"Do you think so? My dear fellow, I never yet met the girl who could cause me one extra heart-throb."

"I never knew what living meant until I met and loved dear Fannie," spoke Fred thoughtfully.

"Fannie will make you a capital wife," replied the elder brother, approvingly ; and then they found themselves at the end of their journey, Hugh wondering in his heart why he had been mad enough to come.

A servant ushered them into the drawing-room. It was dimly lit, and the room beyond the half drawn portiere disclosed a pretty home picture. A slender, brown-haired girl was seated in a deep arm-chair, absorbed in a book, a girl with a winsome face.

"Fan's friend," said Fred, following the direction of Hugh's eyes to that bright room ; "and here is Fan herself," as a very pretty and vivacious dark-haired girl came running lightly down the broad staircase.

After Fred's greeting, which brought the blushes crowding to her round cheek, she turned and welcomed Hugh with pretty courtesy.

"Let us join Miss Dunbar ; this room is a little

cold," she said, leading the way, and the party were soon conversing pleasantly together.

"I fear we disturbed your reading," said Hugh at length, glancing at the book which Miss Dunbar still held.

"It was quite time I stopped; the book has held me fascinated all this afternoon ; I was even impolite enough to steal glimpses into it during dinner hour. Fan laughingly told me that my thoughts were far away, with Kenyon the sculptor, and Hilda, or Donatello, perhaps. I am reading 'The Marble Faun.'"

"Hawthorne is a fascinating genius, and when read in the right mood, singularly interesting."

"Can you not imagine Hilda feeding her doves from the tower window?"

"I always admired Hilda," replied Hugh Ashton, smiling into the soft hazel eyes raised to his. "Are you familiar with 'The House of the Seven Gables?'"

"It is a favorite of mine," she replied with enthusiasm, adding earnestly, "What a very intense and pathetic book it is!"

"Don't talk of books to that fellow, I beg," interposed the saucy Fred. "He is a veritable bookworm ; I could scarcely beguile him from his reading this evening."

"Are you not fond of dancing?" queried the occupant of the big chair.

Ashton confessed that balls and parties wearied him sadly ; they seemed to him a dull routine.

"Dull!" The bright eyes looked their surprise. "I love it all ; the world looks so bright and happy, and the music and flowers lends such a charm."

"Yet you will find very little real happiness in a ball-room," observed Hugh, gravely.

The innocent eyes looked most incredulous.

"I have never been to a ball, but I love dancing parties. We are invited to one for next week—Mrs. Thornton's—and a German for the latter part of this week."

"And I suppose you are all anticipation."

"I am counting the days," she replied with a happy, musical little laugh, while a pretty pink color stole into her fair cheek. "It is all new to me, for the home I left is a quiet, though happy one."

Hugh Ashton felt stirred and pleased at the friendly footing he found himself upon with this slender girl. Their common interest in books had brought it about, for her first glance at him had been rather shy and questioning.

"You are fond of music, I suppose," ventured she.

"I am indeed ; my interest in that survives, and always will, I am sure," replied he, heartily.

"Fanny plays beautifully."

"And so does Ethel Dunbar," returned Fannie, in answer to her friend's remark, which had been half addressed to her. "Let us hear that delightful little polonaise that Fred was so much pleased with a few evenings ago, Ethel."

"I should like very much to hear it," urged Hugh.

So without more ado she went to the piano, and rendered delicately and delightfully a pretty and difficult composition. Hugh found the young girl familiar with many of his favorites ; his critical ear could find no fault in her manner of interpreting them ; she was not lacking in feeling or pathos.

"You have had a very fine musical education," he remarked.

"My father is exceedingly fond of music, and never considered an evening complete without it. I commenced to take instruction when a very little girl," she replied.

A conversation of some length then ensued upon music, and various methods of studying it. Hugh was in the midst of a lengthy remark when a gay laugh was heard from Fred, who was relating an amusing anecdote to Fannie. Hugh Ashton saw a pretty laugh take the place of the serious air Miss Dunbar had worn, and said hastily,—

"We have been very grave. I fear that I have

wearied you sadly, but I am not versed in small talk."

"I am only too happy to meet with one who can talk with me of books and music, for to tell you the truth, I am not accustomed to society small talk ; it wearies me, although I have had oh ! such a happy time here !"

The small hands were clasped impulsively, and the smile was delightfully happy.

"A girl," mused Ashton, "with great capacity for joy or sadness. I should not like to see her sad ; I hope her life may ever be a glad one."

She touched the piano with a few chords, and then said,—

"Now I will play one of my sweetest and saddest waltzes, and you are to tell me what you think of it." And she commenced a slow, sobbing waltz.

Its sweetness stirred Hugh. At length the melody grew most blithesome, only to resume again the waiting, pathetic sadness. Softly it closed and died away.

"Is not that beautiful ?" asked the girl, turning to him, her brown eyes shining and soft.

"I am from this moment a sincere lover of waltzes," he replied, expressively looking down into the clear eyes until they dropped beneath his gaze, while softly the little fingers glided into "Traumerei,"

Then Fannie was called upon to contribute something from her repertoire, and with music the evening drew to a close, Fred at length making the move to go, Hugh promising, at their request, to repeat the call at no distant date.

Out into the raw night air the two brothers went, leaving behind them the two girls, and the bright and attractive home.

"Well, old fellow, you quite distinguished yourself. What in the world did you and Miss Ethel find to talk about?" Fred could not refrain from asking.

"A sensible and attractive little girl, Fred," returned his brother, thoughtfully.

"Is she not? I am looking forward with pleasure to the waltzes she has promised me next week. She dances beautifully."

"Hum! I have no doubt of it," returned the other, looking into space; and then they parted.

The following evening Hugh Ashton and his book occupied the usual position by the centre table. Fred entered in evening costume, carrying a bunch of exquisite roses.

"Where now, restless mortal?" queried Hugh, a little quickly.

"To the opera. Fan and I never tire of 'Il-Trovatore.'"

"And what does Miss Dunbar do with herself while her friend is at the opera?"

"Miss Dunbar goes too, of course. Carrington will occupy the other seat in the box."

"Percy Carrington?" closing his book and speaking gravely. "How many seasons has that fellow been devoting himself to the belle of the hour?"

"He is immensely popular, and it has become a saying that a belle renders her success complete when Carrington honors her with his attention. His wealth is said to be fabulous, and he is a very clever fellow."

"A fickle butterfly, ever on the wing."

Hugh's dark cheek wore a displeased flush; he spoke sternly.

"At all events he seems impressed this time, and little Miss Dunbar will be envied by many a girl this evening. If you were oftener in the gay world you would find him frequently by her side; the flowers he gives her are not to be duplicated in the city; cut from his own greenhouse, you know."

"And what does Miss Ethel think of it all?" asked Hugh Ashton, moving a little restlessly.

"Why the best of it is," replied Fred, smiling, "she is delightfully unconscious of the flattering social success she has achieved, for she has become a general favorite. It is a new world to her, and she evidently believes that all girls are favored with the same cordial reception."

"She looks very young."

"But is older than she looks ; Fannie and she are about the same age, not quite nineteen."

Taking out his watch, Fred said,—

"I must go—it is later than I thought. When Miss Dunbar first arrived, Fan took her out a good deal, and being unaccustomed to late hours, she soon grew rather pale. Fannie's mother, however, who is a capital chaperone, now tells Miss Dunbar that she cannot accept all invitations although they wish her visit here a pleasant one."

"A most sensible woman !"

"That she is. Well, I am off." And closing the door behind him, Fred ran down stairs, thinking, "I have said all I intend to say, and stated the case fairly ; now if Hugh will but rouse up and exert himself, why—but, Fred, you match-maker, don't build on so slight a foundation."

Mechanically Hugh again took up his book. His mother looked in, then went away, after closing the door softly.

"Dear Hugh ! What a persistent student he is," she thought with a half smile, half sigh.

"But a minute later she might have seen him thrust the book far from him, while his head fell upon his hand, and his dark eyes stared into the fire.

He found himself touched, troubled and interested. He pictured to himself the pleasant home

the girl had left, happy and quiet, to plunge into a sea of gayety. "Carrington is often by her side." Again and again the words recurred to him. A man as changeable as the wind, and one who had been giving away little bits of his heart, for seasons past, to each pretty new face. His heart ! there could not be very much of it left by this time.

"Often by her side"—perhaps at this very moment bending over her to whisper soft nonsense in her ear. The thought was unendurable. Springing up, he began pacing the floor restlessly. He looked at the clock ; it was not late ; he would go to the opera himself. But what nonsense was this ! he would again take up his book, read quietly, and then to bed. All in vain ; his wandering thoughts would not centre themselves upon the subject in hand ; they were all of a girl, and one whom he had not met two days ago.

With a laugh and a rush of color to his cheeks, he said,—

"Hugh, old fellow, you're in love at last, and it's love at first sight, I verily believe. Dear little girl ! how did it happen ? I think her innocent trusting eyes stole the heart from me. And now there is no rest until I am near her again ; go to the opera I must."

And in an astonishingly short time he had completed a careful toilet, pausing to take a last

questioning, critical survey of himself in the long mirror, turning away dissatisfied, although the figure reflected there was tall and well knit, and the manly face lit by a pair of fine, earnest dark eyes.

"Mother," he announced, going into the sitting-room, "I am going to the opera."

She did not express surprise, as her son often indulged his love for music in this way, but a new expression in his face struck her forcibly.

"You are looking very bright, Hugh," she said, "and should follow Fred's example, and mingle oftener with others."

"Good advice, mother dear," stooping to kiss her with a smile. "I may follow it."

Once there, Hugh scanned the brilliant house and soon found his brother's party. With a quick heart-throb he again beheld Ethel Dunbar, looking more attractive than ever in a dress of delicate texture, pearls encircling her lovely throat. Carrington was seated complacently by her side. Now he had taken her fan and was toying with it, and he was rewarded by a little smile in answer to something he had said.

How very different she appeared from those around her! Something in her child-like simplicity and grace appealed very powerfully to Ashton. Hugh could never in after years listen to the music of that opera without a curious

thrill, for it was while hearing its strains that he realized the depth and passion of the love he bore her. He felt that a life without Edith Dunbar would prove to him terribly empty and desolate. Win her he must ; but he must be cautious and not frighten her with his vehemence. He must wait patiently until she knew him better, and could learn to love him. It did not even suit him that his presence there that night should be known to her ; he felt he must first school himself to look and speak calmly in her presence, concealing the great love he felt thrilling through every fibre of his being. When the party arose and left the box, he made his exit.

Ashton had seen much of the world, and had travelled extensively. He knew this to be no fleeting fancy. The steadfast brown eyes that had always looked so very calmly out upon the world caught a new light ; he was more restless than of old.

A few evenings later Fred found his brother occupying his position on the sofa.

"Not reading ?" he said, continuing, after a pause, " Fan and her mother were discussing a fit escort for Miss Dunbar ; she is going to Mrs. Thornton's, you know. Fannie suggested Mr. Carrington."

Hugh left his sofa and took his stand by the fire, his face turned away from his brother.

"But I suggested—you," supplemented Fred, "and so I am requested to ask you to become one of our party."

"I will accompany Miss Dunbar with great pleasure."

The quiet voice did not tell Fred much, but he was pleased at Hugh's readiness.

"Then go there with me this evening and tell them so."

"This evening?"

A little flush crept into Hugh's dark cheek; he could scarcely conceal the pleasure he felt.

"Why not? You promised to repeat your call."

"Perhaps it would be as well, as I am still almost a stranger to Miss Dunbar.

And their acquaintance that evening took rapid strides, leaving Hugh more deeply in love than ever, while Miss Ethel confessed to herself, ere falling to sleep, that the evening had been quite the pleasantest she had yet enjoyed.

Mrs. Thornton's dance proved delightful. Ethel had won for herself so many partners that Hugh Ashton was favored with but snatches of her society. At length he carried her off to a quiet corner for rest.

"My beautiful roses are drooping with the heat," she remarked, looking ruefully at the flowers she held.

"Won't you give me one? Choose one for me."

"Would you like this lovely Mermet rose?" she asked, separating it from the others.

Hugh Ashton fastened it on his coat; he might have asked another girl to arrange it there for him, but Ethel Dunbar was so shy that he hesitated to ask even so small a favor. He liked her timidity; it enchanted him. But how well she carried herself! The small head was beautifully poised.

The young man was conscious of a sensation of exquisite satisfaction in being at length near the girl he had learned to love in so short a time. Wonderfully fair and lovely she looked in her dress of creamy lace, caught here and there with loops of gleaming satin, and the little white slipper, of which he caught a glimpse, might have graced Cinderella herself, for size and dainty shape.

"Are you not tired of dancing?" he asked, in a voice from which he could not keep the tenderness.

She turned a childishly gleeful face toward him.

"Tired? I could dance forever, I believe!"

"And yet," glancing at the flowers she held, "I do not believe roses and little girls thrive well in ball rooms."

"Poor roses, and poor little girls!" exclaimed the soft voice; and then she laughed. "I am sorry for them."

He smiled down at her and continued,—

"Do you know what time it is?"

"It is not very late, I am sure."

"Past midnight," he continued.

"Well?"

"Well? And is not that late?"

"I used to think so," she replied, smiling, "but we have been so very gay within the last few months that I have quite changed my opinion on the subject. Your brother tells me that you think nothing of reading until midnight," she added a little mischievously.

Hugh smiled, and replied, with a shake of his head,—

"I have no doubt I do great many things I ought not to do. When a person reaches my mature age, he has a right to remain up until midnight if he likes," in a tone of mock gravity. Then, taking the fluffy white fan, he began to fan her, saying in a voice of immense appreciation, "What a delightful little corner this is! But here comes some one to spoil our pleasure. Will you dance with me, and thus escape the necessity of refusing him?"

His dark eyes looked so very appealing that Ethel arose, and together they floated off. Each

had proved to be, earlier in the evening, anything but novices in the art of dancing. The tall, dark man and his lovely partner formed a pleasing contrast, and Fred could not but marvel at the change that had taken place in his quiet, matter-of-fact brother ; the dark eye was no longer placid and unexpectant—it shone with a deep and quiet tenderness ; the whole face seemed lit with expression ; he looked another man. At length the waltz came to an end.

“ ‘ And oh she dances such a way,
No sun upon a summer’s day
Is half so fine a sight ! ’ ”

quoted Hugh, as he placed Ethel’s little hand upon his arm.

She looked up at him with a bright smile ; it was such a nice smile altogether that Hugh felt his heart give a little leap of joy ; but in another minute she was taken away from him by a fair-haired young fellow. She had gone willingly, too willingly, Ashton thought, following her with his eyes. In another minute she was dancing again.

At length Hugh discovered her seated by the side of Fan’s mother, looking with bright, childish eyes at the gay scene before her.

“ It is time that child was at home,” he thought, but could discover no sleepiness in the pretty eyes so amused and interested in the changing panorama before them.

How very lovely she looked when at length the party came down cloaked and ready to go ! The white wrap with its snowy trimming made her look like a white dove.

After that Fred was not obliged to coax his brother to be one of their party ; he was often with them. Fannie's wedding day was rapidly approaching. One evening she ran down to her friend, who was seated in the library, carrying an exquisite piece of lace with her. Ethel sprang up and bent in admiration over the lovely wedding veil ; it was delicate enough for a fairy queen. So absorbed were the two girls in examining it that they did not notice a ring at the door bell. Some one entered the adjacent parlor unheeded.

"How very beautiful !" exclaimed Ethel with a deep breath.

"I should like to see you in it," said Fan, suddenly, and in another minute she had thrown it over Ethel's head. "An ideal bride," she exclaimed, clasping her hands and favoring her friend with a look of loving admiration.

Somebody else, advancing into the room, thought so too ; his heart gave a great throb, and his eyes were eloquent as he exclaimed—

"How very lovely !"

His deep voice was most caressing. Then a thought struck him.

"Am I to offer congratulations ?" he said.

Ethel thought his voice sounded harsh and constrained.

"Take it off," she said beseechingly to Fan, while the distressed color grew still deeper in her cheeks ; a very pretty picture of dismay and confusion she stood !

"The veil is mine ; I placed it on Ethel's head for mischief," explained Fannie, feeling a wild desire to laugh.

In her haste to assist her friend in removing the bridal finery she chanced to loosen some of the pins that confined the heavy dark hair, and in another moment down it fell, tumbling over her shoulders in wavy luxuriance, giving her an extremely youthful and picturesque appearance. Looking completely abashed, Ethel cast one startled glance around her, then escaped from the room, to return at length, just her old self again, although the timid flush still lingered.

A few weeks later, Fred made a startling announcement.

"The bird has flown, Hugh," he said. "Miss Dunbar has left us."

"Left us !" stammered Hugh, clutching at a chair back for support.

"Her mother is very ill of pneumonia, and her brother has taken her home. Fan must substitute another bridesmaid ; she cannot be present at the wedding."

"Fred"—what a ring Hugh's voice had—"I love that girl. Soon I must tell her of it."

"I guessed as much. Success to you, my boy!" replied Fred, heartily, seizing his brother's hand and giving it an emphatic squeeze. "I only wish it could have been a double wedding."

Perhaps that remark brought the color back to Hugh's cheek; at all events he looked more like himself again, although filled with impatience to know his fate, impatience which he must restrain until after his brother's wedding.

At the close of a nearly perfect day, Ethel Dunbar stood looking out at the growing darkness. A young man came striding along; he looked up and saw the thoughtful, half wistful face; in another minute he had turned up the steps, and soon after he caught in his own the little hand stretched out in glad welcome.

"How glad I am to see you," she said, when they had seated themselves. "You know mother has been very ill, but is now quite herself again."

Then followed eager questions concerning Fannie's wedding, and of news of all her old friends. Ashton answered her, while his eyes beamed with content and the joy of seeing her once again. At length she started up.

"It is growing dark; I must ring for lights."

"Do not," he said, drawing his chair near to hers, while his voice grew very, very tender.

"Ethel, the question I would ask of you shall be asked in the firelight. My little one, I love you, and have loved you from the very first. Can you teach yourself to love me?"

The girl hid her face in her hands to hide the hot color that surged to her cheeks. Hugh noticed that she half turned from him, and the strong man felt as weak as an infant. His heart beat thick and fast, his deep voice trembled as he said—

"My darling, do not turn from me; you must not send me away from you. Am I too late, Ethel?"

"She turned to him; the timid eyes were raised; there was no need to speak, they told their own sweet story better than words could ever do. Somebody's strong arms drew her close, somebody stooped his tall head; there was a glad rejoicing in those kisses. Hugh's anxious forebodings were at an end.

"Are you sure this is not all a dream, Hugh?" queried the soft voice at length. "Perhaps I shall wake up and find myself just a quiet girl, busy with books and music."

"You may keep on with the music and books, my darling; we will study together."

"How delightful!" she cried, clapping her little hands,

"Little comrade! I felt you were that from

the very first." And fondly Hugh stroked the brown head.

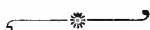
The interview with Mr. Dunbar proved satisfactory. He and Hugh's father had been chums at college ; the young man resembled his father, and the sight of his dark face recalled old times forcibly and most agreeably.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Ashton mingle occasionally in society, but each prefers the happy evenings spent in the quiet of their cosy and beautiful library.

THE END.

KATE'S RING.

KATE'S RING.



“ISN'T Sibyl Moore very lovely, Cousin Felix?”

“By lovely do you mean lovable, Clarice? You have known Miss Moore several years; do you love her very much?”

I hesitated a brief moment, and then cried impulsively,—

“I know it always gives me pleasure to watch her; she moves and stands so gracefully, and then she is very beautiful.”

“She is not my ideal of loveliness,” remarked my companion, shaking his head.

“What in the world is?” I exclaimed rather petulantly.

Cousin Felix smiled and quoted,—

“‘A creation not too bright or good,
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.’

If you were suffering with headache—or heart-ache, perchance—would you turn to Sibyl Moore for sympathy and comfort?”

I was silent—a little vexed with him; he never would half appreciate my beautiful friend.

"Now don't look so grave, little cousin ; I don't know your sunny face when it wears that expression. Are you angry with me ? "

"A little, perhaps ; but then we can't all think alike, of course."

"And yet you and I have many tastes in common. We both like tennis, for instance ; and still here we sit under this tree, contentedly watching the others play, I see that you have broken several of the strings of your racquet."

"Yes, and so I must look on, instead of joining in the sport as usual."

"Let me look at your racquet ; perhaps I can mend it for you."

I handed it to him.

"It's a pretty bad wreck," I remarked.

He examined it carefully.

"It must be entirely re-strung."

"Yes—I know that."

"I am going to the city to-morrow ; I will take this along with me."

"I thank you very much," I replied, "but brother Will goes to the city this afternoon ; he has promised to take my racquet and have it repaired. How long before I shall see it again, do you suppose ? "

"Two or three days," replied my cousin ; "in the meantime you may use mine."

"Not for the world !" I exclaimed. Only

yesterday I had heard him remark that he would not take a hundred dollars for that very racquet, it suited him so precisely. "No, indeed, Cousin Felix ! something might happen to it."

"I am not afraid," he said blithely.

"But I am—and beside, it is too heavy for me, you know." After a pause I said, "How kind you are to me, Cousin Felix !"

"So you don't exactly hate me, even if I can't lose my heart to Sibyl Moore," he said, smiling into my eyes.

"Of course I don't hate you—why, I never did," laughed I. "But you must confess—you can't help confessing—that that green dress—a new shade, cousin—suits Sibyl precisely. And what a fright I should look in that color !"

"I dare say you would look very well in it," said Felix, calmly.

"But pale ! As pale as a ghost."

"I should call you fair rather than pale, little one," said my cousin, quietly. "I should like to see Sibyl Moore in that lavender frock that suited you so admirably yesterday."

"I never saw her in lavender," I said thoughtfully.

"I don't believe you will," he smiled. "By the way, did I tell you that my friend, Frank Grayson, is engaged to be married ?"

"Another one of your friends engaged ?"

"Yes—it makes me feel like doing something desperate myself—getting engaged, for instance ;" and Cousin Felix's cheek wore a little flush as he pulled a clover leaf and said, "Don't you think I ought to follow their wise example, Clarice ?"

"Perhaps so. The lady that you marry must be very lovely, Cousin Felix."

"Yes—I think so," he said. "A companionable girl—one to whom I find myself telling cherished thoughts and fancies, you know."

"Yes—she must resemble a fairy princess."

"Rather small, to be sure," agreed Cousin Felix, "but 'just as high as my heart,' Clarice."

"Yes—and fair, with long locks of shining golden hue."

"Perhaps she might have a tinge of gold in her brown locks."

"Not just a little tinge—all gold !" I said eagerly. "With the lustre and glint upon it, you know."

"Her locks are not long, but rather short ; she can just fasten them in a bewitching knot upon the crown of her small head ;" said Cousin Felix.

"Perhaps she was ill of a fever—perhaps they cut her long curls. But they are beginning to grow long again, just like mine."

"I dare say that was it," said Cousin Felix.

"If she has patience, then her curls will grow—

oh, far below her waist, perhaps," I said eagerly. "And then her eyes — oh, such splendid eyes !—dark blue, with dark eyelashes and eyebrows."

'Hazel eyes," said my cousin.

"No blue ! And the dark eyebrows and eyelashes form such a strange, lovely contrast with her golden hair."

Cousin Felix turned and looked straight down into my eyes.

"You are a wilful girl !" he cried laughingly; and I was surprised to find my cheeks grow warm under his prolonged gaze.

I was shy and silent enough for a few moments, then I exclaimed restlessly,—

"What a bright afternoon ! How nice it is under these trees."

"As nice as nice can be," said my cousin emphatically. "And now, turn about is fair play. Let me portray your prince—the coming prince, dear cousin."

He meditated for a moment, then said very deliberately,—

"Very strong, of course, and tall."

I nodded with satisfaction.

"With a fine head of golden hair and piercing blue eyes," said Felix, most demurely.

"Blond ?" I said ruefully. "I never cared for them."

"But why not? There is your blond friend, Hastings, smiling at you from the tennis court this very minute."

I turned and received such a pleasant smile from Mr. Hastings that I said slowly,—

"Well, blond, then—most princes are fair, I believe."

"But yours shall not be! Not a bit of it!" cried my cousin in impetuous tones. "I was only joking when I said that. Your prince shall be dark and muscular, rather fond of having his own way, perhaps, but still more fond of pleasing his dear little ladye-love. A small scar that he received when thrown from his horse about a year ago is still visible upon his brow."

"There's a scar upon your brow, Cousin Felix!" His eyes grew dark and very beautiful as they met mine. "Why, it's a likeness of yourself!" I cried breathlessly.

"So you recognize it?" he said gently. "I shall constitute myself your knight, sweet cousin; shall you like that?"

"It sounds rather nice," I said thoughtfully. "I suppose by that you mean that you will look after me. You always did that."

"I am your knight. So far so good," he said contentedly.

A gentle breeze came rustling through the large pine trees. Cousin Felix pushed his gay

little tennis cap upon the back of his head until his dark curly locks could be seen straying over his broad brow. How handsome he looked and how strong and capable ! Somehow I was glad he had said he would be my knight. Then my eyes wandered over to where Sibyl Moore was seated.

“What are you dreaming about child ?” questioned Cousin Felix.

“I was wondering if you would criticize me as cruelly as you criticized Sybl a few moments ago,” I said wistfully.

“You have nothing to fear from me,” he cried, and as his eyes met mine he grew oddly pale. “Nothing !” he whispered again.

Then a pleasant silence fell upon us ; my eyes wandered to the active tennis players ; they were playing so well ! At length I chanced to see Mr. Hastings reach an almost inaccessible ball ; he returned it magnificently, placing it so that his opponent could not possibly manage it. I clapped my hands with delight, and loosing a rose from the bunch I wore, tossed it impulsively to him. But when he raised it to his lips, and pressed a fervent kiss upon it, glancing toward me with a bow and a smile, I half wished I had not interrupted the game.

Tennis proceeded merrily enough after that. What a pretty sight it was, with the graceful,

quick moving figures and the afternoon sunlight peeping through the branches at us all!

"How pretty Kate looks in her new tennis suit," I said.

"Very," said Felix, absently. "Are you not tired of watching the game, Clarice? I propose that we take a row upon the lake; it is in the shadow just now."

"No," I said.

"No?"

"It rests me to sit here."

"Then you are tired?"

"Yes, a little; I am tired and very hungry too," I said.

"Shall I go to the house and bring you some of the fruit and cake I saw upon the sideboard?"

"No, thanks; I don't intend to eat anything until tea time. I walked six miles this morning again, Felix—Kate and I."

"You are really famous pedestrians; I don't wonder you feel weary."

"I am not very tired, just pleasantly tired, you know."

A red oak leaf fluttered to the ground. I reached for it.

"Summer is waning," I said.

"You speak regretfully; then you are sorry."

"Yes, I am, for I have enjoyed every minute of this summer."

"I can hardly say the same," said Cousin Felix, thoughtfully. "Next week I go back to work; I can only spend my evenings here."

"How your mother will miss you!" I exclaimed.

"I expect she will; but you are such near neighbors, Clarice, that you must all run over often and see my mother."

"I think we all do," I cried. "I am afraid she will tire of us. But why need you go back to business so soon?"

"I can't afford to remain idle," he replied gently.

"But Mr. Hastings can, and he hasn't half as much money as you have, cousin," I said. "Sibyl Moore told me so."

"What a child you are!" exclaimed Felix, half laughing. "Still I can't afford to idle the months away; you would not have me an idler, Clarice."

"No," I said, thoughtfully; "but it seems hard to leave all the fun for dusty law-books."

" 'Men must work and women must weep,' " quoted Cousin Felix, gravely, then added with a laugh, "not that I flatter myself that any one will weep for me. Why Hastings made a positively brilliant return that time; I believe your rose has inspired him. But what is this I see dancing over the lawn? Your little King Charles. He has a new red ribbon around his neck, hasn't he?"

Just then a swiftly sent tennis ball hit my pretty dog ; he gave a little yelp of pain, and ran to me for comfort and petting. I smoothed his silky coat and said to Felix:

“ See how gratefully he looks up at me—dear little fellow.”

“ I think he likes to be petted by soft, jewelled hands,” said my cousin, smiling.

“ Am I not gorgeous with rings to-day? ”

“ You are, indeed. I didn't know you owned so many.”

“ I don't—they are not all mine; some of them belong to Kate; she does not like to wear them when she plays tennis; she is afraid of loosening the stones.”

“ Ah, I see. Very thoughtful and canny of Miss Kate.”

“ This one is an engagement ring.”

“ Kate's? ”

“ Oh, no! ”

“ Clarice! ”

My cousin's voice was so strange that I looked up in surprise.

“ It was Aunt Katherine's engagement ring—she left it in her will to Kate,” I said mechanically, while my thoughts were busying themselves as to what could make Cousin Felix look so wild and odd; but it must have been partly my fancy, for in another moment he was laughing, and quite

his usual self again. "The ring is a beauty; nothing could be prettier for an engagement ring," I said.

"May I examine it?"

I slipped it off my finger and handed it to him.

"The stone is clear and fine," he commented, "but the engagement ring of to-day has a more airy, delicate setting."

"I like that."

"But such a ring would be too heavy for your slender finger," he said, handing it to me.

Very foolishly, instead of placing the ring upon my finger, I slipped it over one of King Charles' long silky ears; then, to my dismay, my little dog jumped out of my arms, and ran scampering over the lawn!

"Felix!" I cried desperately. "The ring—it's on his ear—it will roll off and be lost in a chink in the ground!"

"Don't look so startled," said Felix, in reassuring tones. "I'll catch that mischievous little dog and bring him back to you."

Springing to his feet, off he started in a rapid walk. I jumped up and ran after him. I don't think I ever saw King Charles travel over so much ground in such a short space of time; but at length, when we had left the tennis players far behind us, I had the satisfaction of seeing Felix coming toward me with my little dog in his arms.

"The ring has slipped off," he said gently.

I gazed at him blankly for a moment, and then commenced to cry most bitterly. Felix dropped the dog unceremoniously, and took me in his arms.

"Hush, you must not sob so," he said. "We'll find that ring—we are sure to."

"Sure not to!" I sobbed. "He ran through the long grass—it will be lost in a chink in the ground. Oh, Felix, if you knew how desolate I feel!"

"I don't," he said. "I never felt less desolate."

"We are sure not to find it; why, a bird might pounce down upon it, or a chicken might swallow it. I have often and often read of such things."

"Or the man in the moon might pounce down upon it. My dear little Clárice, you are alarming yourself needlessly. Now tell me, did you ever see a chicken strolling about in this region?"

"No," I admitted. "But why do you think we will find it? Poor Kate! How she will miss her ring!"

Slipping suddenly away from Cousin Felix, I buried my face in my hands and tried to realize the full extent of the misfortune.

"If we never find that ring," I said at length, "I'll give Kate my two diamond rings to console her."

"And now I have a question to ask," said

Cousin Felix, coming very close and taking my hand in both his own.

"I know—you are going to ask me what in the world I slipped the ring over King Charles' ear for—it was a very, very foolish thing for me to do!" I said disconsolately.

"It had nothing to do with the ring—that ring, at least. A moment ago I held you in my arms, Clarice. You did not shrink from me—you half turned to me for comfort. Ah, my darling! can't you guess? I love you dearly—do you love me?"

This little speech quite chased all thought of Kate's ring from my mind. It was so completely astonishing! Felix loved me!

"I want you for my wife, dear. I have loved you for a long time," said the pleading voice.

My cousin's tones had a new ring, and as the words fell upon my ear a tide of happiness came surging over me that was to say the least, overwhelming. And Felix waited for my reply, and how the birds did sing in the tree-tops!

"Don't send me away—or wouldn't you care if I did cross the ocean, Clarice? I must go far away if your love is denied me—could not stay here, you know."

The words fell upon my heart like a dull, hopeless weight.

"Don't go, Felix!" I said simply.

Well—well, a few minutes later I suggested

that we should search for Kate's ring; it seemed a hopeless search enough, the grass in places was so long and tangled.

"I noticed just the direction the little scamp took," said Felix, cheerfully. "Come this way, Clarice, my pet."

So, hand in hand, Felix and I started upon our search. Over rocks and past clumps of daisies we went slowly on.

"I am so anxious to find the ring that I can almost fancy I see it every minute," I said with a sigh.

"You are getting tired out with stooping forward, so I insist that you sit upon that rock and leave the search to me," said Felix, coaxingly.

"No, indeed! If it were one of my own rings I should not feel so anxious; but Kate's ring! Aunt Katherine's engagement ring!"

"Perhaps some day some one will be searching for Aunt Clarice's engagement ring," said Felix, in a soft, demure tone.

I laughed and clung to his arm, feeling happy, anxious, worried, all at once. Felix did not seem to share my dismay; his eyes wore a smile; he looked the picture of a hopeful happiness. But no ring met our eager eyes.

"I am quite sure it will never be found," I said.

"I never before knew you to be so disconsolate," said Felix.

"I never felt so—not even when I fell down stairs a few years ago and broke my arm. You see, I know this ground. I lost a locket here a few weeks ago, and it was two days before I found it."

"But you found it eventually, dear."

"A locket is five or six times larger than a ring," I said, while the tears filled my eyes. "Here we are at the tennis ground again. Wouldn't it be perfectly lovely if I should suddenly look down and see that diamond glistening among the blades of grass !"

"I hope you'll find it," said Felix, "for you will not sleep to-night if you don't. Ah, here comes Kate across the lawn."

The tennis players had disappeared. As my sister advanced toward us she shook her finger at us. I left Felix's side and ran toward her.

"Oh Kate," I said, you'll never forgive me, but I have lost your ring—not the emerald or the opal ring, but Aunt Katherine's engagement ring that you prized so highly !"

But I checked my sobs ; something was gleaming upon Kate's finger as the sunlight fell upon it. A welcome sight indeed—the lost ring ! Kate had found it not far from where Felix and I had been sitting ; we told her how it had slipped off King Charles's ear—it must have slipped off soon after he left us.

Then, to my surprise, Felix commenced to tell another story, with his arm holding me fast so that I could not escape. Kate said that she could not regret the loss of her ring as it had been instrumental in bringing about so much happiness.

THE END.

THEIR RECONCILIATION.

THEIR RECONCILIATION.



IT was Thanksgiving morning, and a good-sized congregation had assembled in the quaint little Episcopal church at Cliffdale to listen to their pastor's discourse. Outside the dry branches waved to and fro, and the breeze caught up the dead leaves and tossed them in little heaps, but the sun shone brilliantly, and the sky was intensely blue.

A stray sunbeam wandered through one of the stained glass windows and fell in a rosy streak at Dolly Gray's feet.

"This is a day of thankfulness," said the earnest speaker in the pulpit, "a day when sadness and grievances should be thrust aside; a day when each should exert himself for his brother's welfare and good."

Dolly's sweet gray eyes fell; then and there she made a resolve; she would henceforth live entirely for her mother and brother Tom; she would never, never marry—ah, no—but would do all in her power to make those whom she loved happy and content. Those whom she loved? And only two short months ago she had wounded

one whom she dearly loved, so that they two had parted, and from that day they had not once met. He had gone out of her life ; and yet the sun still shone ; its rays did not seem to penetrate her heart—that was sad enough.

If she had but glanced across the aisle, this little Dolly, she would have seen the pair of grave brown eyes regarding her so earnestly. These same eyes had discovered Dolly at the opera a few evenings before, looking flower-like and lovely in her creamy lace frock, with the single white rosebud in her hair. He had fallen into a revery then and there. Dolly had changed, he told himself ; her sweet face looked cheerful, resolutely so, but ah, how he missed the gladness and joyousness that had been always so much a part of Dolly Gray ! His own face in repose was naturally grave—but Dolly ! Dolly with her smiles and light-hearted laughter—Dolly's eyes had always a sunny light—even when her face was reposeful—and now ! Ah, well, they had quarrelled, and all about such a little thing after all !

Dolly had been wilful, he had been abrupt—just because he felt so much. He had warned Dolly not to drive with her cousin, Harold Gray ; his young horses were not safe, and Dolly, well, she had gone, because, as she afterwards told him, if she had not, in time—after they had been married years and years, she and Jack Forrester,

Dolly might find herself merging into just such a little old woman as Mrs. Blake, quite afraid to assert herself, quite tyrannized over—and so Dolly had gone. Then they quarrelled—or at least Forrester had looked coldly at his little sweetheart, and that had half broken her heart, of course. So, slipping the engagement ring off her finger, Dolly returned it to him, and then ran out of the room before he could remonstrate or say a word; Forrester was sure he heard sobs as she fled up the stairs.

He waited, as patiently as he could, but Dolly did not return. Then he went away. The following day he started for Dolly's home, but chanced to meet a friend on the way—a friend who could talk of little else save the birthday party he had attended the previous evening; and Dolly was there—such a betwitting, saucy Dolly, it seemed; all smiles and gay remarks, she had been the life of the party. And at that Forrester's face grew white and set; a dull weight of pain oppressed his spirit; she was glad to be free, then; his coming would only trouble her; she could be gay and light-hearted after all that had gone before. He retraced his steps, not remembering that smiles and bright glances often hide an aching heart.

So Forrester had gone away. He wrote Dolly a little note, bidding her good-by. There

was not a word of reproach in it, yet it was not like those other letters she had been wont to receive. Ah ! all that was at an end now ; and then, without a word of warning, little Miss Gray fainted quite away almost at her mother's feet. And when a little later Dolly said very quietly, "Jack and I have parted, mamma, forever, you know," why, that lady had kissed her child's brow tenderly, hoping earnestly that "forever" might prove to be but a few short weeks, for she missed the girl's ready smile and happy song.

Little Miss Gray was brave. She did not complain, and she tried to look happy ; but it did seem as if all the charm had gone out of life, leaving behind a desolate sadness. How very gray and bleak the future did look to be sure ! Where could Jack be ! Was he ill ? And a few foolish words had so completely driven him away ! But that was a train of thought that was extremely dangerous to Dolly's peace of mind ; she was sure to cry if she did not instantly busy herself in making those about her cheerful.

That night at the opera Dolly had looked wistful and sweet ; she did not know that Jack had left the dreary wilds and the prairies and returned to civilization once more ; she did not know that he was regarding her across a sea of faces with his heart in his eyes. He knew well that unless

he could win Dolly Gray his life would be at best a barren and a sad one.

Seated there, he hardly dared hope, yet somehow the thoughtful young face of the girl he loved led him to conclude that something had saddened her ; had his absence anything to do with that ? Although his heart gave a glad leap, he hardly dared comfort himself with that thought.

Thus it happened that Jack Forrester, hearing that the Gray's intended to spend their Thanksgiving Day at their villa in Cliffdale, suddenly decided that, after much wandering about, it might prove restful indeed to spend the holiday in that neighborhood. There he sat in the quaint Episcopal church, with his arms folded across his broad chest, apparently paying strict heed to the sermon, but stealing glance after glance at Dolly's pensive face. He longed to fold her in his strong arms ! How colorless she looked—a lump rose in his throat as he looked at her.

And after the service he waited a little, until the many friends who came flocking by had spoken to his Dolly—it seemed as if they would never go. Then some one, a tall, dark, bearded man, stepped from the back of the church, reached Dolly's side, then, taking her hand, placed it upon his arm and led her off. And Dolly had gone with an affectionate upward glance and a lingering smile.

For a few moments all was chaos with Jack Forrester. Slowly he followed the pair—slowly, for his feet felt as though weighted. He found the glad sunshine outside and the fresh, cool air ; the blue sky was placid, and the birds were chirping cheerily. But the dead leaves—symbols of his own dead hopes—gave the world a dreary, barren aspect. Stunned as he was, those trees, with their long, bare branches, and the bush and shrub shivering over the first cold blast of winter, seemed most mournfully in keeping with his own desolate heart. And then his very soul seemed to cry out against the blow that had been dealt him ; could he live on from day to day, and know that Dolly might never gladden his life with her love and her sweet young presence ?

He groaned aloud ; the sun went under a cloud, and the wind arose ; it gave a most piteous moan as it sped its way over the hills, and the stalk of a tiny flower just at Forrester's feet snapped quite in two. He noticed that half scornfully, as we are apt to notice very trifling events when half benumbed with trouble.

“So long as she is happy I ought not to complain,” thought he. “Dolly could not bear up under a great sorrow like this, I fear. She would share the fate of that fragile flower when the rude blast came sweeping over her. God grant she may never suffer as I am suffering now !”

And indeed the perspiration stood in beads on the man's brow, for this was so final; she loved another—her look, her smile, told that frankly enough. How could she so soon forget him? He had all along unconsciously cherished a hope that their parting was only for a time—and now?

The wind was blowing a gale when something came whirling toward him. Jack rescued it, and stood regarding the little plush hat, when footsteps came rustling through the leaves.

"The wind carried my sister's hat off; I see that you have rescued it," said the young man, laughingly.

And then whom should join them but Dolly, her bright locks turned about by the wind, a smile on her lips. But as her eyes met Jack's, she grew very pale, then colored rosily. How glad she seemed, how radiant!

"Why, Jack," she cried, "where did you come from?" And then, perchance remembering their quarrel, all the color fled, leaving her as pale as a snowdrop. But recovering herself she introduced the two men, and Jack Forrester, in a maze of delight, remembered that he had often heard of a big brother who was studying art abroad.

Well, the sun came out again, brilliantly, and Miss Dolly, no longer hatless, found herself blushing under a pair of eyes that were showering blessings and love upon her. There were no

need for words—glances can speak more eloquently. And Brother Tom, who had heard of the lovers' estrangement, somehow found that he must hurry on ahead, as he noticed a party of his friends whom he was very anxious to speak to ; and so at last the lovers were left together.

Jack's greeting brought the color into the little pale face ; words were not many, they were too happy for that ; but as they walked side by side along the leaf-bestrewed path, they found no fault with the winter landscape. Joy was singing a song in the heart of each ; a thanksgiving peace seemed to envelope them, driving away all the loneliness and woe.

"Are you happy, dear ?" questioned Forrester, asking the superfluous question just for the pleasure of hearing Dolly speak.

"Yes, Jack, and how nice it is not to have heartache."

"I never should have left you !" cried Jack, with tears in his eyes. "We must never disagree again, Dolly."

"Never again," said Dolly, for oh ! it is sad to be parted from those we—like," timidly.

Jack Forrester will never forget that Thanksgiving Day. And the deep peacefulness that followed so closely after the bitter anguish did not diminish—it followed him through life.

DOROTHY.

DOROTHY.



DOROTHY LEE was seated by the fireside, lost in a pleasant reverie. A half smile parted her lips and lurked in the depths of her soft brown eyes. She made a winsome picture in the gloaming of the chill winter day, as the firelight flickered and danced about her, bringing out the tinge of gold in her bronze brown hair.

She looked very comfortable, too, nestling in that great luxurious arm-chair, her dimpled chin supported by the palm of her little hand. So absorbed was she that she did not notice the sound of the opening door. Park Allison stood regarding the dreamer for a moment with a smile, then he crossed the room and stood by her side. The girl started and looked up.

“Dreaming all alone in the twilight, Dorothy?” said the young man, taking his stand on the rug with the air of a person who finds himself just where he most desires to be.

I have had such an eventful and pleasant day, Cousin Park. Who do you suppose called this morning?” queried the soft, girlish voice.

“Was it some one who gave you flowers?” glancing with some curiosity at the beautiful exotics she wore.

“No—that was this afternoon ; Mr. Thorne sent me these.”

“Thorne sent you those ?” echoed the young man, half breathlessly, the smile dying from his face and leaving it rather pale. “But I must recall the fact that you are no longer a child. Are you eighteen, Dorothy ?”

“I was eighteen two months ago, Cousin Park. But I must tell you who called this morning ; Mr. Thorne’s sister, Mrs. Whilton. She intends to give a large reception soon, and called particularly to tell me that she intends to invite me, and begs Aunt Katherine to let me come.” The girl gave a gleeful little spring, and added joyfully, “Aunt says that I may go,” glancing up in a radiant fashion.

Park’s grave face was in the shadow. At length he said quietly :

“Mother is right, Dorothy ; it is now time that you should see a little gayety.”

And yet—and yet the man sighed.

“A grand reception ! It seems like a dream that I am to go ! Was it not kind of Mrs. Whilton to remember me ?”

“Kind to herself,” said her cousin, smiling a little at the bright upturned face ; then he added,

while a little shadow came over his brow, "and now about the flowers."

"Oh, yes! Aunt Katherine and I were out this afternoon; we met Mr. Thorne; he walked with us; at parting he asked if I was fond of flowers, and later he sent me these; he says his sister's greenhouse is in a flourishing condition."

It was a choice gift, and deserved the admiring glance Dorothy bestowed upon it. Park Alison was silent, strangely silent; at length he exclaimed:

"You are no longer a child! It is quite time you attended dances and receptions," speaking as a man does who is arguing with himself, and trying to convince himself against his will. His glance at the girl was a wistful one.

"How shall I feel among all those others who attend such affairs every week, I wonder?" pursued Dorothy, fixing a musing gaze upon the fire. "Never mind; I can keep as quiet as a mouse, and enjoy watching the gay throng if I am not asked to dance, for there is to be dancing," flashing an animated glance up at Park from a pair of very happy eyes.

"You will not be overlooked, Dorothy," said the young man, quietly.

How tall and grave he seemed, standing there on the hearth-rug.

"It is kind of you to say that to comfort me.

I am sure I shall enjoy the novelty of the scene, and the music."

Then, springing up impulsively, the girl danced off, around and around the fire-lit library.

"Can I waltz, Cousin Park?" she asked, pausing at last, laughing and flushed.

"Like a fairy," he replied, smiling at her. "You will make the other girls very jealous, Dorothy."

"Nonsense! Will you go, Park?" queried the soft voice.

"Yes, dear, to take care of you."

"And will you dance with me—just once, perhaps?" looking up with coaxing eyes.

"I should only be too glad if you would give me every dance," replied the young man; "but I must not be too selfish," with a half suppressed sigh.

"We have decided upon the dress that I am to wear—white tulle looped with sprays of creamy roses," in a tone of child-like satisfaction, adding naively, "it will look nice, I think."

The young man regarded Dorothy with eyes that would have told their story as plainly as words to any one that might have chanced to study him attentively. Little Miss Lee was very much of a child, for all her eighteen years; she noticed the fond affection shining all over Allison's dark face, and was pleased.

“Dear Park,” she exclaimed impulsively, “you are very fond of me, are you not?” reaching out a dimpled hand.

Reverently her cousin took it, then suddenly bending his tall head, he pressed a kiss upon that small hand. Dorothy drew it away with a blush and a queer little thrill; then she said rather demurely,—

“You never did that before, Cousin Park; is that a specimen of society manners?”

The words brought a pang to Allison’s heart. Would she smile up at others as she was now smiling up at him—that radiant, innocent smile? Would other men dare press a kiss upon her hand? Half involuntarily, Park frowned and looked menacing. But his face relaxed, for Dorothy was crooning a happy little song to herself, and smiling at the fire. How lovable she looked! He longed to tell her that he loved her, but he knew that would only startle the child, and perhaps destroy his chance of ever winning her.

Park Allison had loved his step-cousin ever since the day his mother had brought her to their home. The little orphan looked so pale and sad in her black frock that Park’s first impulse had been to call a smile to the wistful young face. She was shy at first, but soon became bright and winsome. The little girl and the tall student at

length became excellent friends. But now Dorothy was old enough to receive attention ; she was past eighteen ; school-days were over ; it was quite time she should meet his mother's friends. There she sat in the firelight, smiling and thinking about it.

I believe she missed the entire sympathy that she had expected to receive from her cousin, and that always before he had been so ready to evince, and at length the silence grew oppressive. Dorothy looked up, the smile died away, her face grew wistful as she met Park's fine gray eyes fixed upon her. What was the sadness that was written all over his handsome face ? He smiled then, and that smile accomplished just what he suddenly meant it should. Dorothy, reassured, returned his smile, the wistfulness vanished, and she found Park ready to laugh, to sympathize, to do anything in the world that might keep her happy and glad. Ah, how little we know of one another's hearts !

Dorothy went to sleep that night without a care or a single troublesome thought to disturb her sweet repose ; she would scarcely have slumbered so peacefully had she known Park paced up and down in his room, and when he sought repose it was denied him, and he tossed about most restlessly. He chided himself for wishing to keep Dorothy a recluse.

"But," mused he, "she will not be any happier, for no bird could sing more blithely than Dorothy has. She will not feel happier or more content, I am sure."

He was filled with unrest, but comforted himself with the thought that he would be always near her. He had neglected society of late—he would return to it.

The days that followed were happy and exciting ones to Dorothy. At length the eventful evening came, and the last finishing touch had been given to Dorothy's lovely snowy costume. She was a complete little figure, from the crown of her shining brown head to her prettily shod tiny feet. Aunt Katherine, stately and imposing in black velvet, surveyed the young girl approvingly, then, drawing Dorothy to her, pressed a kiss upon the fair brow.

"You look very well, child," she said.

A few moments later some one flitted into the library ; Park Allison stood near the fire. With a smile and a blush, Miss Lee crossed the room and stood by her cousin's side.

"How do I look ? Will I do ?" she asked.

Park colored all over his dark, handsome face as he looked down at her and replied, with some emotion,—

"Dorothy, you look like a dream !"

"And I feel as if I were in a dream," she cried.

"It is entirely too good to be true. See, Martha has pinned all my curls on the top of my head. I look tall, I think."

She looked very lovely, and as sweet and fair as the creamy rose draping the beautiful costume.

"Don't dance often or too long, Dorothy," exclaimed her cousin, in impetuous tones.

Miss Lee looked a little surprised to meet such an earnest glance from Park's dark eyes, but Aunt Katherine's entrance caused the young man to turn away. Picking up the white cloak he wrapped his little cousin in it, and they were soon speeding away.

That proved a happy evening for Dorothy Lee. Park had said that she would not be overlooked—he spoke truly; the girl was a success. She did not realize that, but danced and enjoyed every moment of it all. The world was pleased to find Allison in their midst again.

"He looks graver than of old," said one.

"Yes, but he is handsomer; and what do you think of his cousin, Miss Lee?"

"Unique; she will win many hearts."

Then the gossips moved on, noticing Park seated within ear-shot. And Dorothy had a happy time. Cousin Park took her down to supper, but most of the time others monopolized her. The girl carried herself with a quiet grace that attracted all because it was so unconscious; the

tinge of shyness was a great charm. And so, although to Park the evening might not perhaps have proved one long, bright dream, Dorothy did not know that, and she nestled in the corner of the carriage on the homeward drive deciding that the world was a bright place to live in. And then she was lifted out of the carriage, and before long had floated

“Far away in slumber-land.”

Then Aunt Katherine gave a large reception, and after that Dorothy Lee seemed to live in a little whirl of gayety. While Park grew rather thin over it all, it seemed to agree wonderfully well with her; she was indeed winsome to behold. Her cousin proved a capital dependence, and was always ready to go just where Dorothy wished to go. If he was graver—and little Miss Lee thought he was a trifle graver—she never imagined that she was in any way responsible for it; indeed, she fancied Cousin Park very fond of germans and receptions. Secretly she was proud of her handsome cousin, and thought that he made most other men look insignificant and commonplace. Yes, Dorothy was proud of him, although she did not half acknowledge that fact, even to herself.

But the old quiet, happy evenings at home, with books and music, were a thing of the past. Park realized that they were, and he missed them.

Thus the winter sped away. Dorothy had a quantity of admirers, but treated them all with such a pretty, stately dignity that a few complained that "Miss Lee was a trifle unapproachable." Perhaps she did not half understand how much she was admired; she knew that every one treated her very kindly, and that wherever she might go there always seemed a number ready to gratify her every wish. She moved among them all like a little princess, and her sweet, joyous smile brought sunshine to many a heart.

Park Allison was obliged to go off for a week—business compelled it. Somehow Dorothy missed him terribly; she had learned to lean upon and depend upon him more than she knew. He stayed away one week, and found, when he returned, that Dorothy had learned to treat him shyly; somehow a little barrier of reserve had grown up between them.

One evening Park and his mother were seated by the fire; Dorothy was writing up stairs. At length the young man spoke.

"Dorothy has become a belle, mother," he said thoughtfully.

"Dear child! how happy she is!" replied the lady, fondly. "But Park, she will not remain single many seasons."

"She has a lovely face," replied the young man, growing a little pale.

"I think amidst all the throng of new friends Mr. Thorne stands the best chance of winning her," pursued the lady, thoughtfully, "I have noticed she seems to enjoy his conversation and society very much."

"Why speak of any one winning her?" cried the young man, a little sharply. "She is but a child, and does not know her own heart."

The lady was silent.

"She does not know her own heart," repeated Park.

The lady worked away at her fancy work for a few moments, then looking up she said,—

"And yet you must not express surprise if some day I announce to you that another has won Dorothy."

Another? Park looked earnestly into his mother's eyes. She smiled slightly, and said,—

"You must not suppose me blind, dear boy. I read your secret long ago. You love Dorothy; why not tell her so?"

The young man sprang up; a deep flush overspread his cheeks; his eyes sparkled.

"I will!" he cried. "It is time at last, I believe."

A ring was heard at the bell. Herbert Thorne's card was brought in—the servant was sent with it to Dorothy. It was not unusual for the young man to call upon Miss Lee. She had many

friends who enjoyed an evening's chat with her. But as the murmur of their voices fell upon Park Allison's ear he grew strangely restless. He could hear Thorne's deep tones, and once and a while a merry laugh from Dorothy. Allison threw himself on the sofa, conscious that a headache had seized upon him. And now the man's voice seemed to do all the talking; what was he saying to Dorothy in those deep, earnest tones? Park looked restless and impatient enough. Would he never go? At length there came the sound of a chair pushed back over the polished floor, and they must have paused very near the library door, for without intending to play the part of eavesdropper, Park heard a deep voice say,—

“Then I must give up all hope of winning you—you can never return my love?”

A sob answered that, and a murmur. A moment later, the front door closed and he was gone.

Allison listened breathlessly, and the sound of smothered sobs fell upon his ear. How he longed to comfort her—poor little girl! At length the sobs ceased, and soon after the *portiere* was pushed aside, and Dorothy entered the library. She started as she saw Park, and turned as if to go; but thinking to draw her thoughts from her own grievance, he said,—

“I have a headache, Dorothy; will you place

that screen just where it will shield my eyes from the light ? ”

He had noticed the traces of tears upon her pretty face. Dorothy did as he requested, then hesitated.

“ Can I do anything else for you ? ” she asked timidly.

“ Yes—my head throbs so, it would relieve it, I believe, if you were to place your cool hand upon my brow for a moment, dear.”

Dorothy flushed, paled, hesitated, then went to his side obediently, and at the touch of the small hand the man closed his eyes, while an expression of unspeakable content stole over his dark, agreeable face. When Dorothy drew away at length, and turned shyly as if to leave him, he sprang up, saying,—

“ The headache has vanished; perhaps it was heartache, instead. Dorothy, what has become of our old fireside chats ? ”

The girl sighed and slipped into a chair by the fire, then, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

Park looked distressed and infinitely touched, then, falling upon his knees beside the great chair in which she had thrown herself, he said in eager wistful tones,—

“ Do you miss our happy evenings with books

and music that were so suddenly, so cruelly, put an end to ? ”

The girl nodded. A great gladness shone over the young man's face.

“ You are crying as if your heart would break,” he exclaimed, stroking her pretty bronze locks most tenderly. “ Do not sob so; look up Dorothy, my darling. I want to tell you that I love you. I want you for my wife.”

He was watching her eagerly; although her face still remained buried in her two small hands he saw her cheek, that had been very pale, flush rosy red.

“ Speak, darling ! ” he cried. “ Do not keep me in such cruel suspense ! ”

And the answer was whispered in tones so low that the young man was obliged to bend forward to hear it. I think Dorothy's answer must have satisfied him, for a smile like sunshine illumined his dark face.

THE END.

MR. DICK.

MR. DICK.



YEAR after year, as Christmas Day approaches, my thoughts revert to—but let me begin at the beginning.

One evening my brother-in-law came home with an open letter in his hand. Tossing it toward Kate, he said—

“There—read that, little wife.”

My sister glanced over it, and then looked up with a smile.

“So your brother is coming home at last ! How glad you will feel, John ! ”

“I am glad he remembers that there is such a place as America ; he has been gone quite long enough,” said John.

“It is a number of years since you last saw him, isn’t it, John ? ” I remarked.

“Just four,” he replied, thoughtfully.

“Yes, it must be,” remarked Kate, “for, John, you and I did not meet one another until long after, you know, and we have been married two years.”

"That's a fact. I fancy our cosy home will look very attractive to the wanderer."

"Does he resemble you, John?" I asked.

"Not at all, Lil; he resembles my father, who was a tall, dark-haired man, with handsome gray eyes. Ah, here comes mother; I must tell her the good news."

Mrs. Carle was much pleased to hear that her artist son was coming home; her pleasant, motherly face beamed with contentment and anticipation. Dear Mrs. Carle! Kate and I were orphans; she had indeed quite filled a mother's place in our hearts.

One bright winter morning, as we were all seated around the breakfast table, a stranger was ushered in. After a first surprised glance, my brother-in-law sprang hastily up.

"Dick, dear old boy, welcome home!" And then the tall young man stooped to receive his mother's glad kiss.

With his hand still resting upon the newcomer's shoulder, John led his brother up to Kate and myself. What a pleasant, informal introduction it was!

When we were all seated, Mr. Carle said, with a smile—

"John, my dear old brother, yours is indeed a delightful home."

John's expression of entire satisfaction and con-

tent seemed to render a reply superfluous, but after a moment he said—

“My home is a happy one, and now I trust you intend to remain here. Use your European training in art to represent American subjects ; that, to my thinking, is what every true-born Yankee artist should do.” And John settled himself comfortably in his easy chair, as if he intended to launch upon a lengthy argument.

“Spare me !” cried his brother, laughingly. “I have no wish to dispute the charms of my native land.”

“Your art must prove a source of great pleasure to you,” remarked Kate.

“It is, and yet I can assure you it is frequently most tantalizing to strive after an effect without being able to satisfactorily produce it.”

“Do you find that moods have anything to do with it ?” I asked.

“Oh, yes !” he replied, smiling. “We all have our moods, of course ; it is a great mistake to suppose an artist an inspired being who is usually successful ; his life is one of patient perseverance ; but the knowledge that one is gradually improving is sufficient reward. There is a world of work before the true method is mastered, but in that very work there lies fascination and interest enough to constantly spur me on.”

He did not look like a man easily discouraged ;

the gray eyes were very resolute and courageous.

"You look plucky, Dick," laughed John. "I think, if spirit and energy count for anything, you will succeed."

That evening Kate and I were seated in the little library when Mr. Carle paused at the door.

"How very comfortable you both look by that cheerful fire," he said.

"Won't you enjoy it too?" And Kate motioned to a most inviting arm-chair.

He accepted the cordial invitation with an appreciative smile.

"I suppose you can hardly realize how pleasant this warm, firelit room seems after a chill mid-winter trip across the Atlantic," he said, fixing his pleasant gray eyes upon the glorious fire.

"Did you meet with icebergs?" I asked.

"We felt the wintry breath of a few," he answered. "I was not anxious for a nearer view of such ice mountains."

"They always seem to me so lonely, floating here and there in an objectless fashion in the lonely waste of waters," I remarked.

"Once in a while they are visited by a weary bird who feels glad of a cold resting-place for a time."

"Were you in Italy!" asked Kate.

"Yes—I used to enjoy painting the tiny Italians,

with their ragged, although picturesque dress and great dark eyes. The climate is delicious."

"Then you like warm weather?" I questioned.

"Pardon me. I prefer cold weather. I think nothing can surpass one of your clear winter days—the sky a cloudless blue, and the sea brilliant and dazzling; one should live out of doors upon such a fine, frosty day."

"I do!" I cried with enthusiasm. "I always plan a long walk; it is so exhilarating and delightful."

His eyes met mine with a smile. Somehow I could not feel shy with Mr. Dick.

"Do you skate, Miss Lily?"

"Yes; and do you?"

"Whenever I get the chance. I skated last upon the Lake of Geneva; the weather changed to be unusually cold, and for a wonder the beautiful lake formed a safe and beautiful skating ground."

"Ah, how I should have enjoyed that!" I exclaimed.

"I am sure you would, for the shore just at that point is celebrated for its beauty. From one point the southern French shore looked upon us, austere and impressive, while beyond rose the mountains of Savoy. Foreigners love color, you know, and the varied costumes of those enjoying the sport lent warmth and variety to the scene."

Thus we chatted until a summons to supper broke the spell, for Kate and I listened with pleasure while he drew word-pictures of the various countries he had visited.

Thus Mr. Dick became an established member in our family. Weeks slipped into months, and yet he had not chanced to meet Bess Grayling, a friend whom I dearly loved, and whose society I found pleasant. One day I said to her—

“Bess, may I see your engagement list?”

She tossed the little book into my lap. Receptions, musicales, germans, and the opera—the list, indeed, looked a formidable one; but stop! there was a friendly space left opposite to the coming Thursday. Going quietly to her side, I said persuasively—

“Bessie dear, fill up the space in this fashion; write, ‘Will and I spend this evening with Lily Brownlee; must take my music, as I am expected to sing.’”

Laughing a little, after a moment’s hesitation she wrote as I had dictated.

“Mr. Dick, you are to meet my dear friend, Bessie Grayling, this evening,” I said a few mornings later, as he stood watching me give my pretty canary its breakfast.

“I shall be glad to meet your friend, Miss Lily; she sings, I think you said.”

"Yes, Bess has a lovely contralto voice."

"And you are very dear friends?"

"Yes," with emphasis, "very dear; and our tastes are alike, although Bess is ever so much wiser than I am."

"Such a friendship must prove pleasant."

"It is pleasant." Then I added, after a pause, "I am very strong in my likes and dislikes, Mr. Carle."

He smiled down at me and said,—

"And very much in earnest about everything."

"I think the same might be said of you," I replied.

"It would certainly go hard with me if I were disappointed in obtaining that upon which my heart was set," he admitted, taking the bird cage from me and hanging it upon its hook in the sunny bow-window.

"Would you make everything give way before that very strong will of yours?"

"I should certainly use all reasonable means to bring about the desired result," he replied. "But, Miss Lily, what a round pair of eyes! Have I frightened you?"

"I am very glad that you are not my brother-in-law," I said.

He laughed and said, promptly,—

"So am I! Still, why are you glad?"

"I like John the best—he never tries to control me."

"And you do not like control—ah, I see that you do not! Well, perhaps you are a good little girl who never needs advice."

"Perhaps so," I laughed.

"Yet I was very anxious to venture a piece of advice yesterday, when you went for a walk in a thin jacket after having worn a heavy sealskin all the morning. I sided with your sister, and felt sorry when she yielded to your pretty coaxings," he said gently.

I turned rather impatiently from him, and replied,—

"The weather had moderated; I was quite warm enough."

"Perhaps so, during the early part of the afternoon; but you did not reach home until nearly dusk; it was chill and penetrating after the sun had gone down."

"Dear me, how grave we both are!" I cried, feeling vexed at the little touch of disapproval in his still gentle tone. "Ah, here comes Kate!"

I slipped away with such a joyful sigh of relief that Mr. Dick could not repress an amused smile, and I liked him better for that smile; it quite chased away the grave expression he had assumed, even if it were very much the look and glance one

might involuntarily give to a child who had managed to escape a lecture.

That evening proved a very pleasant one to all. Our house was a tasteful one. The drawing-room was especially a favorite of mine, with its rich hangings and choice assortment of bric-a-brac and quaint furniture. Bessie, seated at the piano with Mr. Dick at her side, turning page after page of the music as she sang, formed a pleasing picture, she blonde and gracious, he tall, dark, and evidently appreciative, as he listened to her lovely trained contralto.

Bess is most fortunate in being the possessor of such a voice, and her readiness to sing when she is aware it will give pleasure, renders her a general favorite.

"Lily," said Will Grayling, "do you know you ought always to sit in a chair with a high, carved back and wear bronze velvet and tea roses."

"Ah, now, Will," laughed I, "think how tiresome that would be for me! Your sister is in good voice this evening."

"I want a rosebud," he said pleadingly.

"I can't spare one."

"Ah, but you really must. I see the very one I want—that creamy, half-open bud with the sprig of green leaves."

Loosening it from the others I held it toward him.

"Fix it here for me, there's a dear girl," said the saucy fellow, coaxingly.

So, leaning forward, I pinned it securely to the lapel of his coat; my fan slipped to the ground, making a jingle with its silver chain as it fell, attracting Mr. Dick's attention, for he left the piano and restored the fan to me before I had finished arranging Will's rose to my satisfaction.

"Your fan Miss Lily," he said, taking in review the roses I wore and the bud I had just given Will.

I thanked him and laughed; I did not mind Will, we were such old friends—quite like brother and sister. Bess turned a page of the music for herself, noticing that she was obliged to do so. Mr. Carle returned to her side with murmured apologies, and gave both singer and song his most undivided attention.

Will Grayling was in one of his brightest moods, and kept me amused and laughing with his witty remarks and gay repartee.

"What are you two children laughing about?" asked John, from his seat upon the sofa by Kate's side. "You are both looking very mischievous; let us share the fun."

"I was telling Lily of a conquest she all unconsciously made at Mrs. Wheeling's reception. A friend of mine saw her as she was leaving, and has looked sentimental ever since. Lily says I

may bring him to call, and he is to sing to her, with a guitar accompaniment."

"Such fun!" laughed I. "Kate, we must have your guitar ready, with a blue ribbon. I have often heard Bess speak of him; she says he sings splendidly."

"So he does; but, Lily, if you intend to laugh at him, I sha'n't bring him, notwithstanding he is so anxious to come," warned Will, laughing himself, however.

"Oh, I will be very demure," I hastened to reply, and then became conscious that Bess had ceased her singing, and that she and Mr. Dick were listening to our idle chatter.

"Well," said John, "don't break his heart—that's all; don't send him away with such a long, melancholy face as Cousin Roger wore last week as I met him in the hall; had you refused him, Lily?"

"Why, John!" I cried, feeling my cheeks grow hot. "You know better! It was merely this: he asked if he might escort me to Mrs. Gerold's dance; I told him I was going with some one else—you know you asked me to go with you, Will," I said, and Will gave such a quick, satisfied little nod that every one smiled.

"Exercising, Dick?" said John to his brother, for Mr. Dick had taken a sudden fancy to pace the length of the parlor and back again.

He dropped into a chair with a half smile, then he looked gravely over at me; he looked wearied, I thought, or annoyed.

“Speaking of exercise,” said Will, blithely, “strike up a waltz, won’t you, Bess? Lily and I have not danced together for an age.”

A moment later the lovely strains of a waltz floated through the room.

“Come and dance,” said Will, and so I complied.

Our waltz was a long and pleasant one, and after it was over, Will, much gratified, stood by my chair and fanned me devotedly.

“Go and waltz, Mr. Carle,” suggested Bess, and after a moment’s hesitation he crossed the room and stood before me.

“Will you dance, Miss Lily?”

“You only ask me because you were told to—and you hesitated at first,” I said, half turning from him.

He smiled down upon me as he said,—

“Because I feared you were too fatigued to dance so soon again; if you are not—how shall I persuade you? We are wasting this excellent music—I am quite longing for a waltz.”

His voice carried conviction with it, and giving my fan to Will, I jumped up. Mr. Dick slipped his arm around me, and then what a charming dance we had together! Our step and motion

were, by some happy chance, identical ; how fast Mr. Dick's strong arm held me ; how well he danced, better, far better, than Will, or, in fact, any one else with whom I had ever waltzed.

When we stopped he said softly,—

“My child, do you know how very well you dance ?”

I had often been told so. Somehow the remark, coming from Mr. Carle, gave me pleasure ; his approval made me happy. I went to the piano and said,—

“It is my turn now, Bess ; let me take your seat at the piano ; and oh ! Bess, if Mr. Carle asks you to dance, why, dance, for he waltzes—well, like a German.”

They all laughed at my earnest tones, and Mr. Dick said playfully,—

“How do you know ? Did you ever waltz with a German, Miss Lilly ?”

“Yes—with a nobleman, a few evenings ago,” said John. “I saw her ; they floated around very well, I must say.”

“Go and dance,” laughed I, starting up a most enticing waltz, while Will stood near.

After their dance Mr. Carle thanked me, and whispered that I could play nearly as well as I could waltz. Soon after the evening drew to a close.

One morning Mr. Carle entered the dining-room, saying,—

“John, you advised me some time ago to choose American subjects. I have made the experiment in this little painting ; it is only a study, so don’t judge it too harshly.” And Mr. Dick placed a medium sized canvas upon the floor—upright, so that it rested against the leg of a chair.

My brother-in-law stood back, prepared to look critical; but that expression was speedily chased away by a look of gratified pleasure.

“Why, it’s my little Jack to the life! How did you catch the expression?” he exclaimed.

“Yes, it was Baby Jack in his high-chair, one little chubby hand holding a rattle, while his fat little face was laughing and sunny.

“Capital!” repeated John, surveying it with a broad smile.

His brother surveyed it critically, with almost a look of distrust.

“It has many faults,” he said ; “but never mind ; I’ll give little Jack another trial some day.”

“It’s exactly like baby,” I cried.

He smiled, but hardly looked convinced, then, picking up the canvas, he eyed it until John said rather bluntly,—

“Dick, it strikes me a man should not wear

that dissatisfied look whose pictures sell as readily as yours do."

"Ah!" returned his brother, with a smile. "It is one thing to please the public, and quite another to attain to one's standard of excellence."

"Chiefly, I suppose, because you have placed your ideal upon such a lofty pedestal that it is well nigh impossible to reach," said John.

"All improvements originate in discontent," quoted Mr. Dick; "reaching up and striving won't do me any harm, John."

"Well—only don't look so menacingly at baby Jack's picture. I want it, if it is only a study." Picking it up, my brother-in-law went out of the room with it, only pausing to say, "I know you of old, Dick; you are only waiting to daub over and destroy this, and I don't intend to give you the chance." And laughing, John closed the door upon himself and the prize. I glanced at Mr. Dick, and we both smiled.

One evening Will came, bringing with him his friend, Mr. Seymour. He proved agreeable and entertaining, and his singing was indeed pleasant to listen to; a sweet tenor voice, to which Kate's guitar lent a pretty accompaniment—the ribbon around his neck in true cavalier fashion.

Thus John and his brother found him, when they came in near the end of the evening, with Kate, Will and myself for audience. He was

singing a sweet old ballad when the gentlemen came quietly in, Mr. Carle placing himself not very far from me, and preserving a grave silence.

There was quite a murmur of applause when he had finished; he bowed, and as the hour was late, refused to sing again. He then left with many expressions of pleasure at his enjoyment of the evening.

"Your cavalier looked gay with his guitar and blue ribbon, Lily," laughed Kate, a few minutes later, as we were all seated around the fire.

"Did he not?" exclaimed I, smiling.

"Do you sing?" Kate asked of Mr. Dick.

"He used to," said John. "Have you given it up, old fellow?"

"Not quite," he admitted.

"Then sing now," I cried, giving him the guitar and slyly slipping the blue ribbon over his head.

He looked up at me.

"How many cavaliers do you want of an evening, faire ladye?"

"Now please don't tease, but sing."

"What shall I sing?"

"Something pretty."

"And tender," added John. "Ah, little sister, you are romantic; your eyes were quite shining as you listened to that love-song; you seemed to

have all sorts of fancies running through your little head; do you know it?"

They were all looking at me, and smiling, too; I felt my cheeks grow hot. Mr. Dick's face was dreamy in the flickering firelight. I rallied and said,—

"You are romantic too, John. I read a letter once you wrote to Kate; he called Kate an angel—his good angel," I said, speaking with smothered laughter.

John poked the fire and laughed with the rest at finding the tables turned upon him. Then, when we were all silent, Mr. Dick picked up the guitar and sang, oh, so tenderly! "Annie Laurie." I felt tears in my eyes when he had finished. We all sat thoughtfully in the dim room. I am quite sure Mr. Dick did not know how handsome he looked with that blue ribbon around his neck, and how I imagined him a fairy prince in a costume of palest blue satin trimmed with silver. John said,—

"My dear boy, Europe has greatly improved your voice."

"Not Europe, John," looking into the glowing fire with a smile and shake of his head.

"Not romantic, I trust?" said John, lifting his eyebrows and smiling.

But instead of replying, Mr. Dick dashed off into the gayest little boating song you ever heard

—bright and dashing and not a bit romantic, and then we all said good-night, and I decided that we had all led a dull life until Mr. Dick came home, and that the latter part of the evening had been ever so much the pleasantest—and then I fell asleep.

A few evenings later I stood before the long mirror in my room, surveying myself. It was Christmas Eve, and I was dressed for Mrs. Gerold's dance in a snowy dress that looked to me lovely enough for a fairy princess to wear.

"Don't she look charming, ma'am?" said Sarah, my old nurse, as she stooped to rearrange a knot of ribbons.

"The dress suits you, pet," said Kate. "Now run down stairs—the carriage will soon be at the door."

Sarah handed me my fan and gloves, and catching up the little white cloak, I ran lightly down the oaken stairway. Mr. Dick stood in the hall; he looked up as he heard the flutter of my dress; his cheeks flushed, and I thought I had never seen him looking handsomer as he murmured, "Little white Lily!" then he said quite aloud,—

"Well, you look full of pleasurable excitement, Miss Lily; evidently you expect to enjoy this Christmas Eve."

"I do, I do!" I cried, feeling full of glee, and

then ran into the drawing-room and seated myself before the glowing grate.

Mr. Dick came in ; he leaned his elbow upon the mantel, and looked quietly into the fire.

"I am glad it is so cold—I shall enjoy the dancing more," I said, speaking with a heart brimful of happiness and anticipation.

"Do you intend to dance very much, Lily ?"

"I think I shall ; I am sure to meet many friends at Mrs. Gerold's." Then, noticing for the first time that he was not in ball-room attire, I exclaimed, "Are you not going ?"

"I had partially decided to remain at home, although Mrs. Gerold is an old friend of mine," he said.

"I shall reserve a waltz for you, Mr. Dick," I said.

"Only one ? My child, I think I must go if only to take care of you."

I smiled up at his grave face, feeling saucy and happy.

"Confess, now, that you think it more enjoyable to sit by this fire and chat ; parties are dull affairs," he said.

I glanced down at my lovely dress, and smiled and shook my head.

"I never find them at all dull," I replied.

John had entered just in time to hear his brother's remark and my answer.

“Nonsense, Dick !” he cried. “Children must have their little skip now and then, it does them a world of good. Don’t be selfish man !”

His brother did not reply, but I thought his glance at me rather a wistful one.

“Mr. Dick is not selfish,” I exclaimed. “But must he not go to the dance, John ?”

“Of course he must ! Array yourself for conquest, Dick ; the belle of our city is to hold court at Mrs. Gerold’s to-night—Miss Malcolm, a lady who is handsome, Dick, and clever—very stately and gracious.”

His brother smiled, and picking up my fan arranged the satin bow more to his liking. Then Will entered, looking radiant and beaming.

“All in white like a lovely little bride !” he whispered loud enough for Mr. Carle to hear, and looking, dear boy, rapturously happy in the anticipation of a long evening of dancing.

Kate entered the room, and I exclaimed,—

“Sister, please take charge of this troublesome boy.”

“No—I am to take care of you,” he said.

“Then don’t make nonsensical remarks.”

“Then don’t look so charming, or I shall not feel responsible for anything I may say,” he whispered laughingly.

“Hurry, children !” urged John. “The car-

riage is at the door, and Lil has not yet put her cloak on."

Mr. Dick was quicker than Will ; he folded me in my snowy cloak, with its swansdown trimming, and then stood watching me as I tied the satin ribbons.

"Good by. Don't forget your waltz, Mr. Dick," I said gayly.

Once there it was not long before Will and I found our way into the ball room. How delicious it all was ! Lightly we floated over the waxed floor to the strains of beautiful music, while the perfume of many flowers filled the air.

"Do you notice that clock wreathed with holly, Lily ?" said Will.

"Yes, what about it ?" I asked.

"Why, just at twelve a chime of bells will peal forth, then each is to wish his or her neighbor a merry Christmas."

"What a pretty idea !" I exclaimed. "I must tell Mr. Dick about it."

"Is he coming ?"

"Yes—why not ?"

"Oh, I supposed he intended to spend his Christmas Eve at home, that's all," said Will.

"Just think how lonely he would feel !" I exclaimed.

"Would he ? Well, don't let's waste any time talking about him. I knew you intended to wear

all white with holly in your bonnie brown locks this evening, Lily."

"How in the world did you know that, Will?" I asked.

"Didn't your sister tell you? Why, I asked her if you intended to wear white; if you did, I would bring white rosebuds, my favorite flower. She said 'Don't bring a single flower, Will; she has told me she does not intend to wear one—she will wear a bit of holly with the berries in her hair, and not a flower in her white dress.' Now, for my part, I like to see a girl carrying a fine bunch of roses—that is, I should like to see you carrying the flowers I chose. I don't think I should like any other fellow to send you flowers—Dick Carle, for instance."

"Now, Will, we need not enter into an argument about that," laughed I. "Mr. Dick would never think of giving me flowers. Do you remember the big bunch of daisies you gave me about ten years ago, when we were children, and how I carried them to the picnic?"

"You wore a blue dress, I remember. You have not changed much since that day, after all, Lily. You have the same little girl's face."

"I don't feel as if you had changed much, either, Will," I said thoughtfully, only you have grown taller, you know. You are just twenty, are you not?"

"I look older, though," he replied eagerly. "A fellow asked me, yesterday, if I were not twenty-three."

Some one came up to me and I was led off for the Lancers.

Later in the evening, as Bess and I were seated side by side, while our escorts stood chatting together, I chanced to glance toward the doorway, and there stood Mr. Dick, looking well in evening dress. His quick, gray eyes ran rapidly and restlessly over the crowded room.

"He is looking for someone," thought I, "some friend, perhaps, whom he has not met since his return from Europe. How indifferently he glances from one lovely face to another—they have no power to claim his attention for an instant."

Some one requested a waltz ; I arose gladly, I felt relieved that I was not to feel Mr. Dick's indifferent gray eyes resting upon me in that careless fashion.

He saw me after I had been dancing a few minutes ; as our eyes met he smiled in his old pleasant fashion, and when, a little later, we were promenading in the hall, I turned and found him by my side.

"May I have that waltz now, Miss Lily?" he asked.

"If Mr. John will excuse me," I replied, and

the young man stepped aside, and I took the arm Mr. Carle offered.

We reached the ball-room and joined the dancers. How pleasant it was, and what an expert Mr. Dick proved at waltzing, as, winding in and out, we easily floated here and there, never coming in contact with the many who were circling around. I saw Will standing in the doorway, intently watching us.

A few minutes later, as we were both watching the brilliant scene in happy silence, John passed with Kate upon his arm.

"Look at those two ! Quaker meeting, Dick ?" laughed he. "Come and let me introduce you to Miss Malcolm, my boy."

"I am very well content here," replied Mr. Carle, quietly. "Are you all tired out, Lily ?"

"Not a bit tired. Oh, Mr. Dick, don't you love to watz ?"

"I begin to think I do."

The face he turned toward me had lost its indifferent look ; his eyes were no longer restless, they were very content. I began to wonder if, after all, Mr. Dick did not find the gay scene just as fascinating and delightful as I did.

"I am not tired," I repeated, "Do you see that clock ? Well, just as the clock points at twelve a chime of bells peals forth, then each is

to wish the other Merry Christmas. Now don't forget, Mr. Dick."

"I shan't," he replied, smiling, picking up my fan and fanning me. "When you are rested may I have another dance?"

"I am rested now," I exclaimed, springing up; but gently he drew me to his side again.

"No, No! Sit here quietly for ten minutes, or you will feel very weary to-morrow."

"Ten minutes! It is a life-time to wait; we are wasting this splendend music," I cried impetuously.

And then across the room came Will Grayling.

"Lily, you are quite neglecting me—you dance with everyone else. This galop is inspiring; please come and dance."

So feeling saucy and independent, I danced off, scarcely bestowing a glance upon Mr. Carle.

From across the room I stole a littte look at him; he was following us with his eyes—those steadfast, gentle gray eyes. I was very sorry I left him so unceremoniously. Round the room we went, passing so close to Mr. Dick that my white sash fluttered against him; we did not dance very long. I found it pleasanter to promenade in the cool hall.

I danced a square dance with some one else, and after that was seated chatting with two or

three when Mr. Dick took the seat Bessie Grayling had just vacated by my side.

"You treated me very badly a few moments ago, Lily," he whispered, "but it is Christmas Eve, and so—"

Just then gladly, merrily rang out the silver bells, and Mr. Dick and I cried together, "A Merry Christmas to you!" and then each laughed at the other's eagerness to be first to speak.

Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! In what a magical fashion it rang all over the room! Truly peace and good will seemed centered in that bright place. Words were spoken impulsively, glances were full of kindly feeling.

"How pleasant it is to see so many smiling faces! Society dropped its mask for once," cried Mr. Carle. "What a pity we cannot always greet one another in that cordial fashion.

We lock our hearts up nowadays as some old music box
That plays unfashionable airs!"

My friends flocked toward me with good wishes and cheery greeting. I felt warmed to the heart; my cheeks were warm. I wonder if I looked as glad and stirred as I felt! Mr. Dick seemed to feel the spirit of the time, for his cheeks wore a flush, and his gray eyes were all light with happiness.

“Take my arm, Lily; let us join in the promenade.”

We did join the pretty procession of fair dames in rich, glistening satins sparkling with jewels just relieved by the darker garb of the men. How merry the voices of the happy throng! Some one had mischievously hung mistletoe on the chandelier; it was wonderful to see how clear the space just there was left, in spite of many a young man's sudden wish to promenade down the centre of the room.

We reached the hall, and soon found ourselves in the cool conservatory. We strolled toward the pretty fountain, and I remarked to Mr. Dick how pleasant the shaded light seemed after the brilliancy of the ball-room.

“Yes, Lily,” he replied. “I never cared for brilliancy; a brilliant woman will never win my heart; but when I met a restful and happy little somebody, not so long ago, why, I found she had quite stolen my heart. Lily, I love you!” he cried earnestly.

I hid my face in my hands, feeling overpowered—and so happy.

“I love you,” he repeated in trembling tones. “Look up, child; tell me I may hope.”

I obeyed the earnest tones, and looked up for a little moment.

“Your eyes have answered me, but tell it in

words—that you love me more than Sister Kate, more than Brother John—more than all the world, Lily !”

Perhaps he did not expect an answer, for he took me in his arms, murmuring,—

“ My pretty Christmas present !”

Ah ! the first hour of that Christmas---shall I ever forget it ?

THE END.

PINE VILLA;
OR, ONE SUMMER'S ROMANCE.

PINE VILLA;
OR, ONE SUMMER'S ROMANCE.



MR. SIDNEY WALPOLE had thrown himself upon the moss-covered rocks, and was enjoying the fine prospect stretching away below him, when the sound of voices fell upon his ear.

“There ! how do you like the view, Doris ?” said a man’s voice.

“It is beautiful. How cunning the houses look in the distance, John ! I could almost fancy that I might hold one of them in the palm of my hand.”

The soft, sweet voice pleased Sidney, and turning, he saw a little party of three. The two ladies were evidently sisters, as they resembled one another—the man, Sidney sprang up and held out his hand.

“John Holmes !”

“Sidney Walpole, did you spring out of the ground ?”

The two men grasped hands, and seemed well pleased to meet.

“And now I must make you acquainted with

my wife and Miss Benton, my sister-in-law. "Yes," continued John Holmes, after he had introduced his friend, "I am no longer a forlorn bachelor, Sidney. I met Bessie the very day we graduated—we danced together—and she stole my heart."

"Now hush, John!" cried pretty Mrs. Holmes, laughing and blushing in a most becoming fashion. "This view makes you feel sentimental, I am afraid. It is an attractive country, is it not?" she remarked, turning to Sidney.

"Delightful—and the brooks are full of trout, I notice."

"Where are you stopping, Walpole?" asked John Holmes.

"At the hotel."

"Well, just get your traps together and make us a visit. Do you see that gray house half hidden by trees, just off the road that winds along to your right?"

Sidney nodded.

"Well, that's my home for the summer months. Come, make us a visit, and we will talk of old college days. I should enjoy it immensely."

"Thanks, very much," replied the young man, hesitating.

"Don't say no, Mr. Walpole," exclaimed little Mrs. Holmes. "My husband is fond of fishing

—he was wishing only this morning that he had a companion for his excursions.”

“You are both very kind,” replied Sidney, “but I am afraid I cannot avail myself of the invitation. The fact is, months ago a friend of mine, an artist, arranged that we should spend several weeks together in this picturesque region; he secured connecting rooms at the hotel, and I left him busily at work at his easel, painting the view from his window. His room quite resembles a studio, and we seem very comfortably settled there. However, I should like to join you upon your fishing excursions, John.”

“Come along with me to-morrow, then,” said Holmes. “I expect to spend half the day at the sport. And now suppose we seat ourselves upon the rocks and rest—for it was quite a long tramp from the house.”

Sidney found himself next Miss Benton.

“Your name,” he said, “has a familiar sound. It reminds me of a chum of mine at college—Fred Benton.”

“He is my eldest brother,” replied Doris, lifting a pair of gray eyes to Sidney’s face. “Was he not very full of mischief at college? He is when at home, I know.”

“Yes—I enjoyed his companionship immensely—he was so full of life and vivacity,” said the

young man. "Is he still fond of music, Miss Benton, and devoted to his Cremona violin?"

"Yes—he is in Europe just now, but will return to us in the fall. You can imagine how much he enjoys Munich; he writes that he lives on music," replied the young girl.

A pause ensued, then Sidney remarked—

"What a splendid spray of clematis that is," regarding the long vine that hung over Miss Benton's arm.

"Is it not? It grew on the rocks just where Brother John's long arm could reach up for it."

"I believe I noticed it on the way, and I had half a mind to gather it; I am glad I left it for you now," said Walpole, with a smile.

"Thank you; that sounds generous," returned Miss Doris, with a little nod and a laugh. "How pleasing the view is!" gazing off at the landscape stretching below them.

"So you like it, Doris," said her sister. "I thought you would. John and I often visit this place. It is Doris's first introduction to the cliffs, Mr. Walpole; my sister only arrived at Pine Villa last evening.

"Ah, indeed! The country around us is exceedingly picturesque. I was told at the hotel that the view from the cliffs was well worth beholding. I am sure my informers were right.

But did not you and your sister find the climbing very steep and long ? ”

“ Oh, no ! ” replied Mrs. Holmes. “ Doris and I are good walkers.”

“ And the scenery was so wild and grand,” said Miss Benton, with some enthusiasm. “ Did you notice those tall, mossy rocks just below—and the tree, with the crow’s nest perched in its green branches ? ”

“ I did not see the crow’s nest,” replied Sidney, smiling into the pretty childish eyes raised so eagerly to his. “ You must point it out to me when we go down—that is if I may join your pleasant little party.”

“ Certainly, old fellow ! ” cried John. “ And do not forget that you are to go fishing with me to-morrow. “ Hello ! what a flock of birds—oh, that I had a gun ! ”

“ I am so glad that you haven’t, John,” said Doris, in her soft voice. “ They look so happy flying up there with the blue sky and the sunshine all around them. Poor birds ! only think how terrified they would feel if a number of their party were suddenly wounded.”

“ What a child you are, Doris ! ” exclaimed her brother-in-law, with a half impatient laugh.

A delicious breeze stirred the leaves. Doris took off her white shade hat and pushed the curly locks from her brow. What lovely bronze-brown

hair she had ! Somehow as Sidney glanced at her, an unwonted feeling of tenderness stole over him.

“I shall trim my hat with these daisies growing within reach,” announced Doris, stretching out a small hand and plucking a number. “How pretty they are ! There—now I have quite enough, I am sure.” And busily she twined the long stems in the soft, snowy scarf that encircled her dainty hat.

“How prettily you arrange them,” observed Walpole, watching her with admiring eyes.

“They arrange themselves, I think. I like daisies, don’t you ?” lifting a face as fresh as a daisy’s to his.

Miss Benton met a glance from a pair of very fine dark eyes that suddenly made her feel shy ; to hide it, she sprang up and commenced flitting about gathering ferns and delicate wild flowers. John Holmes drew near his friend and commenced a somewhat lengthy conversation upon the cultivation of peach trees—a favorite hobby of his. Doris had wandered over to a clump of bushes, and was humming to herself as she arranged the graceful ferns she had just gathered. Suddenly she started and gave a little scream as something rustled in the bushes near her. Hastily she tripped over to the party she had left so unceremoniously.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed, gazing at them with sweet, startled eyes. “ There’s a snake among those bushes, I am sure.”

Sidney Walpole sprang up and went toward it; John followed him, exclaiming,—

“ Nonsense, Doris, my dear ! ”

As the men approached the bush a large bird flew upward, making Doris and her sister start again as it rustled among the branches.

“ Only a bird ! ” exclaimed Miss Benton, looking relieved but slightly abashed.

“ Oh, Doris, afraid of a bird ! ” laughed her brother-in-law, teasingly.

Miss Benton did not deign him a reply, but evidently decided it was safer to remain near the others, as she seated herself upon the moss contentedly enough.

For a time the conversation became general. Doris chatted away very merrily. Usually rather shy with strangers, she was so enraptured with the fairy-like beauty of the cliffs, and so glad to get away from the dusty city, that she felt as light-hearted as the birds singing on the tree tops.

Walpole again alluded to the artist, and said, casually,—

“ He and I intend to sketch a little every day.”

“ Oh, do you sketch ? How very delightful ! ” exclaimed Miss Benton.

"Yes, I sketch ; do you ?"

"I never tried—I wish I could."

"What portion of this landscape would you choose for a picture ?" asked Walpole.

Doris looked gravely about her, and then said rather timidly,—

"I don't know, it is all so beautiful."

"Well," cried the girl, after a careful survey, "I think I like it just where we can catch a glimpse of the lake glistening in the sunlight, and the tall spire of the church standing out against the clear sky."

"I like that, too," replied the young man, gazing off with half dreamy eyes.

"And now tell me where your choice for a picnic is," said Doris.

"Mine includes the lake too. Do you see that irregular gray stone mansion ?"

"Yes---it looks like a castle, doesn't it ? Friends of my sister's reside there."

"It pleases my fancy---I must make a sketch of it some day. And will you let me help you draw the pretty view that lies beyond it, with the church spire ?"

"If you won't find it too much trouble. But I shall prove very stupid, I know. Ah ! I have lost my ring."

"How did you happen to do that ?"

"I have a very foolish habit of slipping it on

and off my finger; it slid off into the grass just about here."

They searched for it, and Doris' curly head was very near to the young man's. A sudden resolve took possession of him; he must win this dear child for his wife if he could; with her life looked exceedingly bright, fair and promising; without her---if Doris had glanced at her new friend then she might have seen him grow suddenly pale; for a moment his pleasant eyes wore an expression of pain; but a gleeful exclamation from Miss Benton banished that---she had found her ring.

"What were you searching for so anxiously, Doris?" asked her sister. "Did you lose your ring again?"

"Yes---and found it," holding up her small white hand, upon which a quaint, old-fashioned ring gleamed in the sunlight.

"What is the stone---a ruby, is it not?" questioned Sidney.

"Yes; a ruby surrounded by pearls."

"Who gave it to you---Cousin Leo?" questioned John, mischievously.

"Cousin Leo!" cried Doris, vexed to find herself blushing under Sidney's dark eyes. "No, indeed! Aunt Isabel gave it to me last spring."

A sober expression had stolen over Walpole's expressive face; his mood influenced Doris; she

ceased her merry chat, and gazed pensively enough off into space. How very lovely she was ! And he had known her only one short hour, yet now the mere thought that he might lose her wrung his heart with anguish. Already she had grown unspeakably dear, life had taken on a radiant brightness, a fresh charm, since he had looked upon Doris's sweet, frank face.

"See the mowers, John," said Doris at length. "They have certainly chosen a perfect day for their task."

"They recall," remarked Sidney, "the lines of a poem :---

" 'Through all the long midsummer's day
The meadow sides are sweet with hay ;
I watch the mowers as they go
Through the tall grass, a white-sleeved row ;
With even strokes their scythes they swing,
In tune their merry whetstones ring.
Behind the merry youngsters run,
And toss the thick swaths in the sun.' "

"How well that describes it !" exclaimed Mrs. Holmes. "Doris, I have no doubt you would like to toss hay."

"Indeed I should ! What fun if we could make up a party !"

"I dare say the mowers would be very glad of assistance if a heavy cloud threatened rain," observed Holmes. "It would not be the first time you and I tossed hay together, Walpole."

"No, indeed ! And are you as fond of cricket as ever, John ? "

" Haven't played a game for two years."

" But he plays tennis—we all do. Are you fond of the game ? " queried Doris.

" Yes ; I like it exceedingly."

" Then you must play with us ; we have a very good ground for the court," said Mrs. Holmes.

" Your brother Fred and I have had many an exciting game together. Do you know, Miss Doris, I think you resemble your brother."

" I believe I do. I wish he could be with us this summer."

" Well, children," cried John, " I am afraid we must start for home ; the sun is beginning to cast long shadows ; we will be late for supper."

Reluctantly they all arose.

" I shall never forget my first visit to the cliffs," said Sidney, thoughtfully, thinking what a warm, sweet feeling his meeting with Doris had brought him. He might have added,—

" Hear my soul speak :
The very moment that I saw you did
My heart fly to your service, there resides
To make me slave to it."

The journey home was a pleasant one indeed. For a time the climbing down the cliffs proved steep and precipitous. Doris made splendid progress assisted by Sidney's strong, firm hand, and quite distanced her sister. She proved sure-

footed and not very timid, and when at length they reached a level piece of ground they decided to wait for the others. Miss Benton's bright eyes discovered a tree covered with initials.

"Tourists have been here," she said. "Suppose we cut our names upon a branch."

"There are so many names here—let us select a tree that has not been touched before," suggested the young man.

They found one, and Doris said,—

"Cut yours first—just a letter—then I will cut mine ; B for Benton, you know."

"But I am afraid to trust you with this sharp knife. I have an idea ; I will combine W—my initial, you know—and B in a monogram.

So Doris sat upon a rock and watched him, and when he had finished, remarked that she had not thought that the two letters would combine so gracefully.

John and Jennie joined them, and they proceeded on their way. After a little more scrambling they reached the foot of the cliffs and found themselves upon the road. Doris's little feet did not need guiding any longer, and her small hand was drawn from Sidney's clasp. The air was sweet with new-mown hay—the reapers were singing as they wended their way home. The young man left his friends at Pine Villa, feel-

ing that he was happier and more contented than he had ever supposed it possible to be.

He found his way often to the pretty villa among the pine trees. It was a picturesque little home with pleasant piazzas. If Doris had looked attractive in her plain mountain suit of dark green cloth, she was adorable in dainty frocks of white or palest blue, and jaunty to behold when arrayed for tennis.

Sidney brought his friend, the artist, to call upon the Holmes'. The two friends spent many happy hours at Pine Villa; the Holmes' entertained delightfully, and they had a quantity of charming friends living near them.

One magnificent moonlight night Doris and Sidney were seated upon the vine-covered piazza. The lights from the parlor gleamed softly. Barrows, the artist, was seated at the piano; he was playing a delicious melody, and Mrs. Holmes and her husband was seated near him, listening with pleasure to his elastic, sympathetic touch.

Sidney Walpole was stirred and happy. He glanced tenderly at Doris as the moonlight fell upon her sweet young face, and then he looked off at the tall pines standing erect and stately before the house, like so many sentinels. Here and there, in bright patches of light, fell the moonlight.

"Listen," he said. "My friend is playing a

melody of Rubenstein's. How very satisfying those chords are—how rich and full."

Both were silent as the passionate music throbbed forth upon the stillness of the night full of longing and tenderness. As Doris glanced up at her friend she saw that he was much moved.

"Such beautiful music!" exclaimed the girl, in a tremulous tone. "What a gift it is to be able to play so well."

"Yes, Doris, his music to-night touches me—thrills me!"

He would have said more, but the artist joined them, and all sat quietly in the moonlight.

"Another moment and I should have spoken! I should have told her my love. Is it too soon? I have known Doris just three weeks—does she look upon me as anything but a friend?" thought the young man.

"And naught is heard on the lonely hill
But the cricket's chirp, and the answer shrill
Of the gauze-winged katy-did."

Rousing himself, Mr. Barrows said impulsively,—

"Is this place fairyland, Miss Benton?"

"Why—do you feel a spell stealing over you?" she asked laughingly.

"I think Mr. Walpole does, he is so silent; not a very entertaining companion, is he?"

"Sometimes. If he is quiet, your music is to blame for that--- it thrilled him, he said."

"But he has often heard me play those very selections before and he has not appeared thrilled. Perhaps it's the moonlight," said the artist, stealing a rather mischievous glance across Doris's pretty head at his friend.

"Perhaps it is," said the girl thoughtfully. "One is apt to have moods upon such an enchanting evening, I think."

"It is such a change from the city. I believe I should always like to live in the country---this country."

"When stern winter comes you will feel only too delighted to return to town," said John, resuming his promenade with Jennie.

"Many of your friends, the birds, leave this place for the sunny south when cold weather approaches," said Sidney, "And of course you could not find a single flower."

"That is very true, but winter has its own attractions."

"You would find it exceedingly monotonous."

But Miss Doris did not look convinced.

"Cousin Leo says that only those who have spent the entire year in the country can appreciate it fully," said the sweet voice, "and he knows, for he often enjoys himself sleighing among the hills."

"It is frightfully cold," said the artist. "I sometimes leave the city and return with a few snow scenes. But now, Miss Benton, I regret to say I must leave, although it is difficult to part from fairy land. I am due at the Longfields'—they wish me to criticise a painting that they have recently purchased." And he made his adieux.

"Won't you sing for me, Mr. Walpole?" asked Doris a few minutes later.

"The moonlight is so attractive I am loth to leave it. Suppose we follow your sister's example and promenade. Shall we? Or must I sing?"

Doris blushed.

"Of course there is no 'must' about it. We will promenade if you like."

"I'll sing for you first, since you desire it," said he; and they left the piazza and stepped through the long windows reaching the floor, and went into the parlor.

And he sang for her, and this time Doris was thrilled by listening to music. It was a love-song, and suited the young man's rich, tender voice. Doris was silent as they stepped out into the moonlight again; her lovely, childish face wore a soft flush, but she was soon chatting in a light-hearted fashion.

"It is too soon to speak," thought Sidney, as

he watched her and listened to her sweet laughter. "What a child she is, and, (with a sigh) how dearly I love her! Oh, how dearly!"

As they paced up and down the moonlit piazza the young man realized how pleasant it was to have Miss Doris all to himself. Other friends, of late, had claimed a share of her sweet society; it had chafed him, but for this evening he could enjoy uninterrupted the pleasure of hearing her speak, or of meeting her half shy, half smiling, glance.

The wind commenced sighing in the tree-tops.

"Are you cold? August dewes are heavy."

"Yes, but we are protected from them on the piazza.

"Are you cold?" he repeated, touching the small hand resting upon his arm. "I suggest that you wrap yourself in that scarf that I noticed upon the piazza."

"Oh, no! I do not feel cold. I dislike shawls," promptly.

"But your frock is so thin. Come—let me persuade you," pausing in his walk.

Doris shrugged her pretty shoulders and then said "Oh, well, then!" speaking with sweet petulance.

In a moment Walpole had found the scarf and was wrapping it around her.

"Shall I throw the end over my head so—like

a mummy ? ” she asked, laughing, and making a little grimace at him.

She looked more lovely than she knew.

“ That protects you nicely,” said Sidney, regarding her approvingly.

“ Too well ! ” said wilful Doris, slipping it off her fluffy brown head and throwing the end over her shoulder.

They resumed their walk.

“ What very black shadows those trees cast,” said the girl. “ I never look off at those distant mountains at night without feeling lonely.”

“ For the city ? ”

“ Oh, no, not that ! I like the country, you know, I have been told that foxes and wolves range amongst those mountains in the winter.”

“ I don’t think they would harm you.”

“ I would not care to trust them. I have heard of men being followed by wolves and—and devoured, too,” with a little shudder.

“ Not in this region, believe me ; it is too civilized.”

“ Have you ever travelled much, Mr. Walpole ? ”

“ Yes, I have been about around the world, Miss Doris.”

“ Oh, charming ! Then you are very learned, I am sure, for travel is the very best way of acquiring knowledge. Don’t you like America and

this portion of America better than any other part of the globe ? ”

“ Yes, I am very sure that I do.”

“ I was told that I should like England. We went there last year. I prefer America, although the English country homes are delightful,” observed Doris, thoughtfully.

“ Doris, my dear,” said her aunt, stepping upon the piazza, “ don’t you think it is too chilly for you to remain out of doors ? ”

“ Oh, no, Aunt Sophy ! It isn’t cold, I can assure you, and I have a scarf on.”

“ Put something over your head then,” said the lady, and Doris did so, remarking that she was only too glad to find it cool, as the day had been so warm.

“ My sister thinks of inviting a number of friends here for a dance. I should like that. I am fond of dancing—are you ? ”

“ Yes—your sister must not forget to invite me.”

“ Oh, no, indeed ! She counted upon you,” replied the girl. “ And we shall have the lawn lit with lanterns.”

“ The place will present a festive appearance.”

“ It ought to, for it is to celebrate my birthday.”

“ How old are you, Miss Doris ? ”

“ Shall I tell you ? Just eighteen. Mamma will be here; they always celebrate my birthday in some way, for I am the youngest of the family,

Mr. Walpole. I have three sisters and one brother."

"Quite a good sized family."

"It used to be, but my sisters are all married now, and live in homes of their own, and Brother Fred is away most of the time, so of course that makes the family a very, very small one. Jennie and I consulted together, and I decided that I preferred a dance to anything else, so in two weeks prepare to dance at my birthday party," said the soft voice.

"I am already filled with anticipation."

Doris laughed a gay, pleased laugh, and hummed a blithe little song to herself, so full of happiness was she.

And the days slipped away—golden days every one of them, although usually other friends joined their excursions upon the lake and to the cliff. Doris learned to sketch and to row, and lived a happy, joyous life, and grew rosy and more lovely every day. She was the light of Sidney Walpole's eyes; and John Holmes read his secret and rejoiced, for he was warmly attached to the fine, manly fellow.

Other friends flocked around them, other eyes gazed admiringly at Doris and grew softer when she approached. She took the approval and the admiration as a child might have done, and

lived in a pleasant little whirl. Truly it is said that

“He that hath light within his own clear breast
May sit i’ the centre and enjoy bright day.”

And it was the old, old story that is ever new, told over again, because one pair of childish eyes had learned to smile kindly upon him. Sidney Walpole was the happiest of men. It filled him with such sweet pleasure to read anew each day some lovely trait in Doris Benton’s character—to find that her heart was warm and very tender, ever anxious to aid those who were poor or afflicted. To hear the village children whisper together of her as she passed them in her dainty robes, calling her “the kind lady who had talked with them or given a sick mother jelly”—made by her own helpful little hands. To find that Doris was willing to give up a pleasure in order that she might remain at home with Aunt Sophy, who was suffering from a severe headache. There was scarcely a day that he did not notice some noble trait in the young girl, and who can wonder if he was living an enchanted life, or that he was restless and eager to know his fate? But Doris’s frank, pleasant glances told him as plainly as words could that it was only a friendly liking she cherished for him; he must wait for more.

They were out upon the lake one afternoon. The setting sun cast a rosy glow over the pretty

sheet of water, rendering more beautiful the reflection of the trees and the ripples left by the even strokes of the oars. Doris's soft white dress was rosy in the warm light ; her hands were full of the water lilies they had gathered.

As the girl looked up, she met her friend's dark eyes fixed earnestly upon her. They had grown very well acquainted during the last few weeks, and she returned his look with a frank, lovely smile.

"What a happy summer this has been—this is !" he exclaimed impulsively. "The very happiest of my life."

"I have been happy too," replied Doris, speaking thoughtfully. "Do you know, when I awake in the morning and hear the birds singing in the trees, and catch a glimpse through my window of the blue sky and the sunlight, I feel so happy that often I sing too-wit ! to the birds."

The young man wondered a little wistfully if, after all, the source of her happiness might not chance to be the same as his own ; perhaps all unconsciously Doris was learning the lesson of love. How softly the oars moved—how wistfully he regarded her. This time Doris could not read his look, and her eyes fell, and for a time both were silent.

At length clear and fair dawned that much anticipated day—Doris's birthday—and at night the

moon arose and cast its white light over the earth.

The rugs and bric-a-brac had been removed from the parlors, and the polished floor looked inviting to those fond of dancing. Flowers were everywhere, and the beautiful home presented a most attractive appearance. The grounds and piazzas were lit with colored lanterns of odd shape and picturesque appearance.

There were many pretty and several really beautiful girls present. Sidney Walpole had met many lovely girls in his travels ; he was not surprised to find that Doris Benton somehow made those around her appear colorless and inanimate. She was dressed in white tulle ; the short sleeves were tied with a full knot of ribbons ; a necklace of pearls encircled her round white throat, a birthday gift from her mother. Her young eyes looked out upon the world with happy interest and enjoyment, her innocent smile gave pleasure to everyone around her. A few might shake their heads and say with a half-sad smile, " Ah, youth, youth ! what a happy time it is !" But Doris's content was built upon a good foundation ; her kind, innocent heart would keep her always young.

Cousin Leo was there—a fine looking man with a blonde beard. Doris danced more than once with him ; they seemed excellent friends.

And Sidney Walpole secured her for a number of dances early in the evening. He found that to dance with Doris was to enjoy waltzing more than he ever supposed it could be enjoyed. It was sweet to tread through the depth of that bright room amidst the throng and lead the little feet on, on, while the music swelled along, and the plaintive violins sent forth notes of thrilling sweetness.

Then suddenly Sidney resolved to speak—to tell his love that very night. He would find a chance—lead her away from the throng and hear her answer. Would he read love in those sweet gray eyes, or—indifference? Not that—oh, not that! His heart swelled, and he was strangely silent.

And Doris danced with others until again she found herself promised to Sidney. She was promenading past him when he stopped her.

“My waltz, Miss Benton, I believe.”

“Ah, yes!” bowing in pretty dismissal to Cousin Leo. And again they circled around, while the music touched both with its minor key of thrilling sweetness.

With a sudden impulse Sidney stooped his tall head and said in low tones,—

“Are you happy—dear?”

The little remark seemed to him daring, and his heart fluttered as he met a glance from a pair

of sweet, startled eyes. He repeated his question and in a half breathless whisper Doris answered "Yes," and missed a step in the waltz, when Sidney pressed the little hand he held.

"I have something to tell you—Doris. May I tell you after this waltz?"

"I am afraid not. I am promised to Mr. Harrison for that," she replied softly.

"Well, when my waltz comes then, for this one is ended."

Some one claimed Miss Benton, and reluctantly Walpole resigned her.

He was patiently waiting for his waltz with Doris, and deciding that instead of dancing he could tell his story better upon the piazza, when a man's voice, coming from the deep window near him, fell upon his ear—an intense voice.

"Dear Doris," it said, "you can't think how happy I am. I love and am beloved. The wedding-day must be soon—in October, I think."

"It's a pretty month, Cousin Leo."

Then some one approached and claimed Miss Benton. Sidney regarded the girl; her cheeks wore a flush—her eyes were smiling and bright.

At first he was not conscious of any particular sensation; he felt numb and without feeling. But gradually a pain, sharp and bitter as death, stole over him. His life lay before him—years of it, no doubt—life without Doris! Life without

Doris---how could he ever bear it? He could hardly measure the depth and breadth of his misery ; it staggered him.

From across the room John Holmes noticed his friend's haggard face ; he stepped to his side, and slipping his hand in Sidney's arm, said,---

"My dear boy, this room is warm---you do not look well. Step out on the piazza ; the cool air will revive you."

Walpole allowed his friend to lead him out into the starlight, feeling as if weights hung upon his feet, and wondering vaguely what had happened to him.

"Life without Doris !" he murmured ; and John, catching his sister's name, left Walpole to himself and went off to search for a certain little somebody.

The cool air did revive Walpole---only to make him realize more forcibly what a catastrophe had fallen upon him. And John, with Doris upon his arm, found the young man standing just where he had left him, his handsome face entirely devoid of color, his dark eyes hopeless and very miserable. Doris looked up, and was frightened at the mournful, even tragic, glance she received ; then very gently she said,---

"What is it ? John, how pale he is ! Are you ill Mr. Walpole ?"

She looked white and frightened.

"Never mind," said the young man, speaking bravely. "Do not stay, for see, Cousin Leo is looking for you," as a tall form stepped on the piazza for a moment, then disappeared. "He wants you, Doris."

"Oh, no, he doesn't ! I don't suppose he really wants anyone but Claire Allen now," speaking thoughtfully.

"Claire Allen !" exclaimed the young man, in a breathless tone.

"Yes---they are engaged, you know---he told me of it to-night."

The remark wrought a marvellous change in Sidney Walpole ; the ashy palor left his fine face ; he colored exceedingly.

"O Doris !" he cried, and his eyes gave a glad, triumphant flash.

"Well, old fellow," said John, with a grin and a comical shake of his head, "you do not need my care---you look quite able to take care of yourself, I see."

Then he took himself away, and Miss Doris half turned as if to follow him ; but Walpole caught her hand and held it fast. As their eyes met he smiled and cried impulsively,—

"Stay with me, Doris ! I have something to tell you, dear." And in a tumultuous, eager fashion he told all the story of his love. "And

now do not send me away, love—do not pain me so !”

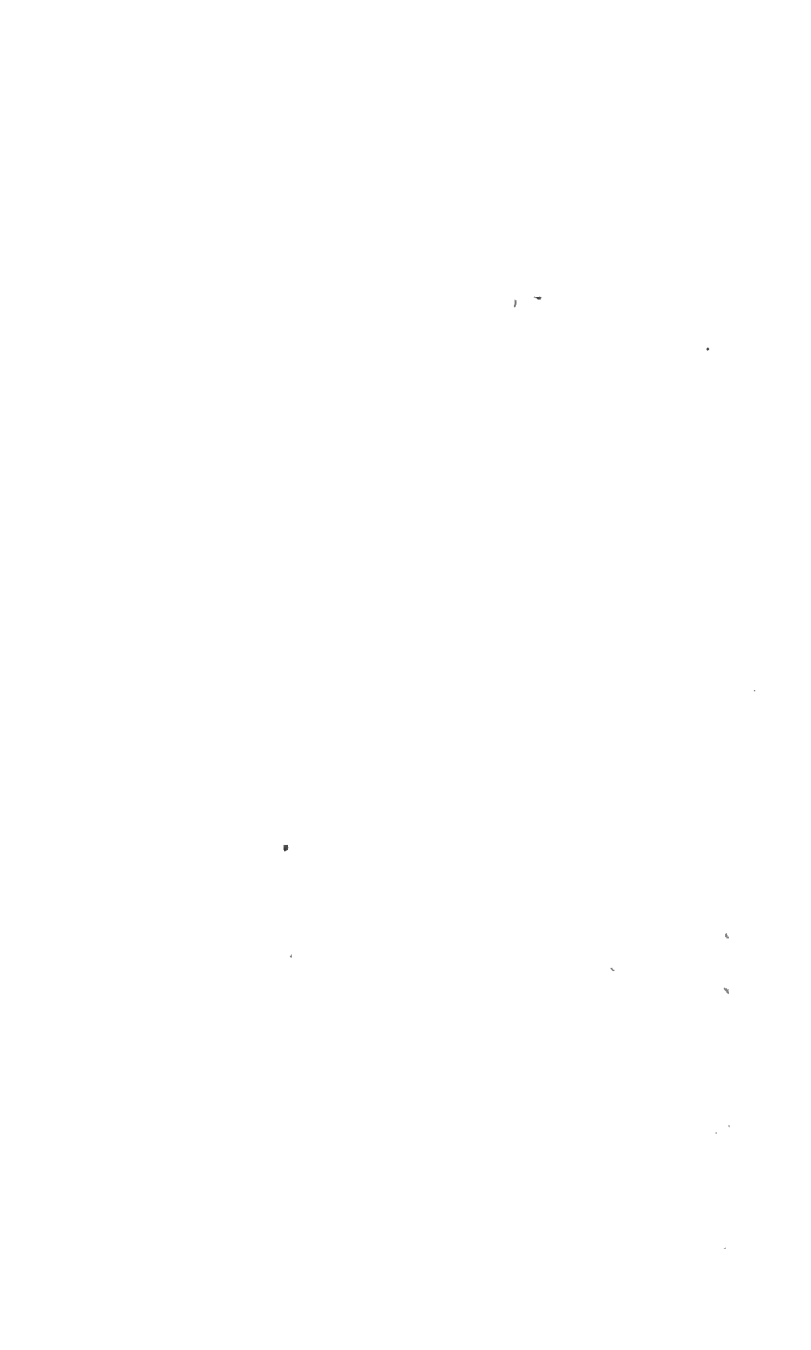
“I shan’t, for that would pain me, I find,” whispered Doris, timidly.

“Then you love me, little one ?” joyfully.

“Yes,” speaking with downcast eyes and flushed cheeks. “For when I saw you standing there so white and sad, I thought I should never feel happy again.”

And then—well, then a saucy cricket chirped and winked at the lovers as they stood close together under the lanterns.

THE END.



UNCLE GUY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

UNCLE GUY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT.



TWILIGHT was creeping on; the fading rays of the setting sun still lingered in a warm streak of color across the clear winter sky. A child stood in the deep window of a cosy, fire-lit room, looking out upon the snow-covered world. He was a picturesque little fellow, and his delicate beauty was enhanced by the rich velvet frock he wore, its sombre tint being relieved by a deep collar of beautiful lace.

“Mamma,” he said at length, addressing a lady who was seated near the fire, “Uncle Guy’s late to-night, isn’t he? Almost as late as papa.”

“Yes, dear; but he will be here soon,” was the reply.

A pause, then little Arthur said impulsively,—

“I love Uncle Guy so much—so very, very much! Next to you and Papa I love him better than anybody in this whole world. I wonder what he would like Santa Claus to bring him. Oh, oh! to-morrow will be Christmas!” jumping gleefully up and down until the sunny curls, that

reached quite to his waist, fluttered around him like a golden shower. Then, running over to the lady, he leaned against the arm of her chair and repeated, "Mamma, what would Uncle Guy like Santa Claus to bring him?"

The lady smiled at the eager, upturned face, and replied,—

"When your uncle was a little boy, he was just as fond of his top and hobby-horse as you are, Arthur. Now he is more difficult to please, perhaps. I cannot say what he might like best; you must ask him, pet."

The boy mused for a while, then went back to the window. At length a rapturous cry from him announced Uncle Guy's return. Arthur ran from the room, that he might be the first to meet his uncle at the door.

A few moments later, a young man entered the room with the child perched upon his shoulder—the boy liked his high seat; his cheeks wore a flush, his blue eyes were smiling. Guy Willoughby seated himself by the fire, with his petted nephew upon his knee. Extending his hands to the blaze, he chatted with his sister until Arthur's sweet childish voice exclaimed,—

"Uncle, what would you like for a present from Santa Claus, and what did you do, when you were a little boy, Christmas times?"

"What did I do?" queried the young man,

gently stroking the soft, curly head. "We used to have jolly times, I remember," he said, smiling at his sister.

She returned the smile, and he continued,—

"Do you remember, Estelle, what restless little mortals we were the day before Christmas? It seemed as if the hands of the clock crept along slowly just to aggravate us."

"Our clock was lazy to-day, too," announced Arthur. "What else?" earnestly.

"Well, we usually arose before it was light to look at our presents. Your grandma always had a splendid table for us, with a sofa drawn up near it. There was plenty of time for a nap before breakfast. I have often slept there, with the treasures Santa Claus had sent me clasped close to my happy little heart."

"Can I get up before light to-morrow morning, mamma?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"Certainly not, dear," she replied promptly. "Give Santa Claus plenty of time—he does not like to be hurried, you know. I suppose he is pretty busy."

"And what would you get in your stockings, Uncle Guy?"

"Everything nice," replied his uncle, smiling into the fire at the remembrance of those exciting times, "and always just what I wanted; for you know old Santa Claus is very nice, and sends out

hosts of small fairies; they find out what each boy or girl wants."

"And does he know just what you want for a present uncle?" queried the little fellow.

But a ring was heard at the bell.

"That's papa!"

Away the boy darted to welcome the new-comer. Mrs. Maitland followed him. In a short time Arthur returned, to perch upon his uncle's knee and listen to his chat.

"What would you like for this Christmas, Uncle Guy?"

The young man's face grew very grave; he stared into the fire in a wistful fashion, and at length exclaimed,—

"What's the use of wishing, Arthur? I shan't get it."

"Why not?" questioned the boy, raising his big blue eyes. "Is Santa Claus angry with you, dear Uncle Guy?"

"Perhaps he is, child; last Christmas he gave me a very sweet present, but I lost it."

"O uncle!" There was a world of condolence in the sweet voice. "How did you lose it?"

"It was partly my fault. I quarrelled with it, Arthur—foolishly! And so I lost it," he answered bitterly.

The little boy felt that his uncle needed comforting—he looked so dejected.

"Dear Uncle Guy," he said pressing his soft cheek against the young man's.

A pair of strong arms clasped the little fellow close; the child's sympathy was grateful to Guy Willoughby; his fine face softened, although his dark eyes were still full of yearning.

"Perhaps Santa Claus will forgive you and give you the same present this year, uncle," said the boy, thoughtfully; then added, "but you did not tell me what the present was."

"Nor shall I, inquisitive one!" returned the young man. "And now enough of fireside confidences and vain regrets. What do I hear—is not that the dinner bell?"

"Yes—let me ride on your shoulder to the dining-room."

Guy Willoughby gave his little nephew a playful shake.

"I spoil you, Arthur," he cried. "You are becoming a perfect little despot."

The boy laughed gleefully as he was placed upon his tall uncle's shoulder and carried down stairs to the dining-room.

Santa Claus must have considered Arthur Maitland a small favorite of his; it was no wonder the boy wore such a happy little face as he stood in his favorite stand by the window the following afternoon, looking out at the sleighs that went

skimming along. But suddenly his blue eyes became terrified.

“O mamma!” he cried in excited tones. “Look—those horses are running away!”

The lady hastened to the window.

“Mrs. Grey and her daughter! Ah, they have been thrown from the sleigh! But the snow is very deep there; they may escape unhurt.”

A few minutes later, the thoughtful, warm-hearted lady had installed her two friends by the glowing fire.

“Dear mamma,” said the younger lady, “are you quite sure there are no broken bones?”

The sweet voice was tremulous.

“Quite sure, child; the snow was as soft as a feather bed—I fainted from fright.”

“I don’t wonder, for the horses ran a dozen blocks before we were thrown.” A little shudder finished the remark; then, noticing her mother’s pallor, the young lady added cheerfully, “But the snow certainly was soft—it was a most fortunate escape.”

“It certainly was. I am naturally timid, as my husband’s death resulted from an accident of that kind,” remarked Mrs. Grey in low tones. “We must dispose of Jack and Prince, just as we were obliged to dispose of Nero several years ago.”

Thus it happened, when Guy Willoughby returned, a surprise awaited him. It had been on

the whole not a gladsome Christmas Day for him; he had been oppressed with sadness. He heard merry voices in the drawing-room, and hesitated at the door. Should he join his sister's friends? He was scarcely in the mood for it. Just then a little laugh reached his ear—he started.

“I am dreaming!” he exclaimed, while the color mounted to his cheek. “It is impossible that she should be here.”

Had old Santa brought her? He entered the room with an expectant light in his eager eyes. No one saw him enter, and he stood for a moment taking in the group. His sister's pretty face was in smiles, while she talked to a sweet-faced lady who was seated in a deep chair. Guy hardly saw these two—his eyes rested upon the girl seated in the window with Arthur close beside her. All the pain and the longing left him as if by magic; the sight of Eleanor Grey was indeed balm to him. Then he heard his sister exclaim,—

“Why, there stands Guy. These friends of ours met with an accident, and were thrown from their sleigh almost at our very door. We cannot feel too thankful that they were not injured.”

The young man greeted the two ladies as if he were in a dream; he held Eleanor's little hand in his own until she drew it away from him with the exclamation, “Guy Willoughby!” and although she flushed vividly at sight of him, the

tones were tones of embarrassment and not of pleasure. And the flush faded and left her lovely face very, very pale; she looked down and rather away from him. And there stood Guy, eager to clasp her in his strong young arms, while Eleanor grew pale and then red in an oddly sudden fashion, and did not seem to share his rapture.

Feeling chilled, the young man said in low tones,—

“It is long since last we met, Eleanor.”

The girl stirred restlessly at the sound of his deep, tender voice, and looked up.

“Call me Miss Grey,” she said, although her lip was quivering like a child’s.

“I could not!” cried Willoughby, impetuously, gazing down in a steadfast fashion into her sweet eyes until she dropped them. Then he continued very gently, “Your horses ran away with you? Eleanor, are not those the very horses I warned you were not safe almost a year ago?”

“Yes—Prince and Jack.”

“We quarrelled then,” continued Guy, “oh, how foolishly! How like a couple of children! I was older, and should have known better. I forgave you your share of it long ago,” he said with a tender little smile at her, “but you met all my advances with rebuffs. Eleanor, are you sorry for that?”

She looked so, but as she hesitated, little

Arthur, who had been glancing eagerly from one to the other, and guessing that something was wrong, cried earnestly,—

“You must not make Uncle Guy look so sad; he lost his Christmas present last year, and he’s so sorry, he says, for it was sweet, you know.”

The girl looked up timidly.

“Yes, Eleanor darling, I’m sorry; I want my Christmas present back again. Will she come?”

Eleanor swallowed her pride and stretched out a small hand. Guy caught it in both his own, and stopping, kissed her with fond approval.

“Good child!” he said.

Then turning to his nephew, who seemed to think his uncle looked very handsome with that sparkle of joy in his fine eyes, Guy Willoughby said,—

“Arthur, you were a prophet. Santa Claus has forgiven me, and bestowed upon me the very same sweet present I lost so long ago.” And the twilight came creeping over the earth, while two hearts were flooded with happiness.

THE END.

MARGARET'S FRIEND.

MARGARET'S FRIEND.



“CHESTON, who do you suppose was the belle of Mrs. Allen's ball ?” inquired little Mrs. Vincy.

“My dear sister, you know I do not frequent balls, and consequently do not number very many belles among my circle of acquaintances.”

“But you know this one, or used to. Have you forgotten Margaret Castlemaine ?”

“Margaret Castlemaine! That child a belle !”

“Why not ? She is not such a child; she must be eighteen at least, Cheston.”

“True—it is four years since last I saw her. Is she pretty, Helen ?”

“She is more than that,” she replied thoughtfully.

“Handsome, then ?”

“No, not handsome; that does not describe her; she is lovely!” exclaimed the lady, impulsively.

“And yet she was a very quiet looking girl.”

“But she always had beautiful eyes, so clear and trusting. She is an undoubted belle, and has improved amazingly.”

"You surprise me," said Cheston Dale. "The demure little student a belle!"

"She is demure still, after a fashion. I do not wonder that she is such a favorite; she was engaged for every dance," said Mrs. Vincy, smiling.

"And so Margaret Castlemaine has become a butterfly of fashion!" speaking thoughtfully. "I had supposed her devotion to her studies and her passion for music might have fitted her for something nobler."

"My dear, ridiculous brother!" cried Mrs. Vincy, with a half-vexed laugh. "How you do love to rate at our balls and dancing parties! Believe me, it would be quite impossible to imagine the girl frivolous, merely because she enjoyed an evening of dancing. I dare say she can appreciate other things all the better for that."

"She is not frivolous, then?"

"Impossible, with such a face! I had a long pleasant chat with Margaret's mother; you know they have recently returned from Europe. I also snatched an opportunity to say a few words to Margaret. They pressed me to call, and I shall gladly avail myself of the invitation; they are delightful people. Margaret interests me."

Her brother arose and went to the window; he stood looking out; at length he said musingly,—

"And I presume the young lady is in for a season of balls and parties."

"And the opera and theatre. Yes, I suppose so; our city is a gay one."

"And you think she enjoys such things?" queried Cheston Dale, quietly.

"I was delighted with the sight of her happy face; she showed her enjoyment of it most frankly, and as all young girls should do. She flitted around the room like a sunbeam, and yet there is a tinge of pretty reserve about her that renders her very fascinating."

"Forgive my curiosity," exclaimed the young man, noticing how earnestly his sister spoke.

"You must meet her, Cheston, although I dare say she will not approve of you. She has her likes and dislikes, I have no doubt," remarked Mrs. Vincy, a little wickedly.

Her handsome brother turned and smiled quietly at the speaker.

"Perhaps she will not approve of me," he said; "she will doubtless think me very tame compared with her ball-room friends."

Her sister stole a little admiring glance at him. The word "tame" could never have been applied to Cheston Dale; his dark eyes were full of spirit and energy.

Mrs. Vincy took up a piece of fancy work and

busied herself with it thoughtfully. At length she said,—

“How old are you, Cheston ?”

“Just thirty-two. Does that seem a great age—or would it to a young girl, for instance ?”

There was a vein of real earnest under the light tone.

“I can hardly say, as I am almost thirty myself. However, I believe most young girls delight to converse with men much older than themselves; it flatters their vanity.”

“And is Margaret vain ?”

“Margaret ?” arching her eyebrows. “Were we speaking of Margaret, dear ?”

Chester flushed and laughed, ran his fingers through his short curly hair, and cried,—

“Helen, you are a sad tease, and I have tarried too long. I must leave you now. I shall be due at the office soon. Good morning.”

His sister looked after the tall, erect figure from her seat in the prettily draped windows.

“He is a dear good fellow! I am sure any girl would feel proud to receive attention from such a man as Cheston,” mused she, working many pleasant thoughts into the gay embroidery. “I wish I could interest him in some one—Margaret Castlemaine, for instance. It would prove very beneficial to him. Now society bores him; he does not care for evening calls, and is

consequently losing all his friends. It is a shame for such a man to bury himself so completely in business; he needs rousing. Other girls cannot interest him; Margaret's face has won my heart, it will win her many hearts; perhaps Cheston—"

But the entrance of the lady's husband put a stop to castle-building; their conversation drifted into other channels.

Mrs. Vincy was a little lady who usually carried out her plans. She made a most enjoyable call on the Castlemaines, and warmly urged both ladies to visit her, telling Margaret to come just as often as the mood prompted her.

Cheston Dale did not chance to meet the girl for several weeks. One evening his sister exclaimed suddenly'—

"Tom, will you go with me to the Castlemaines? I must return a piece of music; I promised Margaret she should have it to-day, but had quite forgotten it."

"My dear Helen," replied her husband, "I have some writing I must do this evening; send one of the servants."

"No — that would not do. Will you go, Cheston?"

"To the Castlemaines?"

"Yes. Please do—I am very anxious Margaret should have the music."

"I will go if you like," replied her brother, very quietly.

"You magnificent fellow!" cried the lady, in tones of immense approval, and shortly after they were both wending their way to the Castlemaine mansion.

Margaret was seated in the drawing-room. She arose and embraced Helen Vincy, and then turned and regarded Cheston with questioning eyes.

"Must I introduce you two? Margaret have you forgotten my brother Cheston?" asked Mrs. Vincy.

"No indeed!" holding out a small hand. "And I have not forgotten the horse-back rides."

Cheston took the soft hand in his own, and said as he looked smilingly down into her upturned eyes,—

"Your horse ran away with you once, I remember, Miss Margaret."

"And you caught him!" laughing in a sweet, impulsive fashion.

And then they seated themselves. The three were soon chatting sociably together. Mrs. Castlemaine joined the party; and Cheston found himself conversing earnestly with the young girl. Frivolous? He thought he had never looked into a more earnest or truer face. She was gleeful and light-hearted, too; her merry laugh was

pleasant to listen to. Evidently she did not dislike him; her recollections of old times must have left an agreeable impression. Cheston Dale was not treated as though he were a stranger.

"You were very good to me," she said, earnestly. "What delightful rides those were! I could study twice as well for the out of door exercise."

"Do you ride still?"

"Oh, yes! with brother Hal."

"May I join you some day?"

"We should be pleased to have you."

"And you are fond of dancing, I hear."

"Yes, indeed. And you?"

"I have not waltzed for three years," he confessed.

Margaret opened her bright eyes at him, and evidently thought him a great barbarian.

"You became tired of it?"

"Very tired."

"I cannot imagine it," she exclaimed. "To waltz with a partner who dances well is a dream of pleasure; the gliding motion exhilarates me, and then you know I always did love music, and some of our waltzes fairly throb with melody."

"I know; I used to feel the charm, and perhaps," glancing down at her, "perhaps, Margaret, my love for it may revive. I am sure I should enjoy a waltz with you."

He spoke impulsively. The girl smiled in an innocent fashion, and said naively,—

“You have no idea how well I waltz.”

“Oh, yes, I have! I can fancy a waltz with you might prove quite a poem,” he exclaimed, while a slight flush crept over his cheeks, his dark eyes beamed with pleasure.

A little shyness stole over Margaret; her friend feared that he had frightened her; he had not meant to speak so ardently. His next remark was quietly spoken.

“And you retain your love for music?”

“It increases with each year,” she replied gravely, “but with each year I feel how very little I know of it.”

“A favorable sign. You are progressing, no doubt.”

“Yes, I believe I am; but still how much there is to learn!”

A little thoughtful pause ensued. Mrs. Castlemaine was conversing confidentially with Helen Vincy; she was heard to remark,—

“You would like Madame Jay; she is an expert; she designed the white embroidered silk dress that Margaret will wear at the german next week.”

A bewitching smile stole over Margaret's fair face; she looked distractingly pretty, as she cried, saucily,—

"Oh, mamma, pray do not mention germans or dancing parties while Mr. Dale is present! He has given up all such vanities," stealing a very mischievous glance at him.

Something in the smiling look Cheston bent upon Margaret caused her to drop her saucy eyes; the color deepened in her soft cheeks; a very pretty picture she made; and then Helen Vincy said,—

"Yes, Cheston spends his evenings at home—he abhors society."

Margaret had forgotten her momentary shyness; she look thoughtful for a moment, and then said in a half frightened tone,—

"Then he is a woman-hater!"

The remark sounded strangely coming from such sweet lips; it was no wonder the young man cried with some energy,—

"Not a bit of it! He is never that, Miss Margaret! Helen, what a remark! And I have just been engaging this young lady for a waltz."

His sister opened her eyes at him, and then said discontentedly,—

"Cheston is a great care to me. I do not like to see him leading such a humdrum life. I wish he would marry."

"That sister of mine is somewhat outspoken," thought Cheston Dale, while a slow flush that

was not altogether indignation mounted to his cheeks.

He glanced at Margaret.

"And what is your opinion, Miss Margaret?" he asked, smiling, as he met the soft, rather childish, eyes fixed upon him.

"I think those who remain single are much happier," she said, thoughtfully.

"And why, child?"

"Because they are free," she said rather earnestly; "they are not caged, you know."

"Caged!" he exclaimed, and he was smiling at her, and again his smile, tinged with mischief, brought the color to the girl's cheeks. There was some tenderness in the smile, too; it rendered the man's face most attractive. The mischief vanished, but the tenderness remained, as he said thoughtfully, "And yet it is the old, old story over and over again. When love comes we do not feel that we have lost our freedom, but rather that we begin to live at last."

He spoke earnestly, and Margaret thought that she had never seen her friend looking more manly. She was rather silent for a moment, then, springing up, she crossed the room and seated herself at the piano, and Cheston joined her there. Picking up a piece of music, he turned the leaves in an idle fashion.

"Margaret, play something for me, won't you?" he asked persuasively.

The small fingers wandered over the keys for a moment, and then commenced a little selection. It was like the girl herself, tender and winsome, with here and there a touch of pathos, and sometimes a deeper chord of passion.

Absorbed in her music, Margaret did not know that she was giving Cheston Dale an excellent opportunity of studying her; she did not know that he was thinking hers a lovable face indeed, lit by those trustful eyes. She turned to him when the last chords had been struck, and was unprepared for the full, approving glance; it was a pleasant one to meet, and Margaret favored the young man with a smile of such sunny sweetness that he then and there longed to fold her in his arms.

But it was not until he had left the pleasant home that he realized what an evening of happiness he had had. His sister's sole remark to him was,—

"Cheston, don't say after this that everything bores you. Your face was almost as bright as Margaret's this evening."

"Margaret—a pearl!—she is well named," he said thoughtfully, and then managed to lead his sister into conversing on other topics.

He soon fell into a friendly way of calling at

the Castlemaines. He was not often fortunate enough to find Margaret alone; she had many friends, and treated them all in a frank, pleasant fashion, but Cheston was pleased to note that the shade of reserve, so natural to her when in the society of newer friends, never became apparent when in conversation with him; she greeted him as an old, pleasant friend.

The young man was not slow at perceiving what Margaret's inexperienced eyes failed to note, that among the many who called upon her two or three evinced more than a casual interest in the piquant warm-hearted girl. It chafed Cheston; he could not endure to think that any other man should dare to think of his Margaret. His Margaret? Yes—Cheston loved his little friend; he was restless enough when away from her and most unutterably happy in her presence, he realized that Margaret was the light of his eyes. To touch her soft hand, to look into her lovely eyes, was happiness indeed. What a slight child she looked, for all her eighteen years! To meet her, to be near her, Cheston became as gay as any of them. He was much sought after, and frequented germans and musicales and dancing parties.

He was waltzing with Margaret Castlemaine one evening, thinking what bliss it was to guide her little feet through the throng, leading her

with that firm, steady grace that bespeaks the experienced waltzer, when the girl spoke.

"And so waltzing bores you ;" speaking a little archly.

"No, Margaret, I love it. Is not this music unutterably sweet ?"

"And so sad," in a plaintive voice.

"Are you sad, Margaret ?"

"Call me Miss Castlemaine, please," in a half laughing, half imperative tone.

"I could not; you are just 'Margaret' to me," he replied simply.

"But remember I am no longer a child, I am quite grown up. I do not call you 'Cheston.'"

"I wish you would," he exclaimed.

"But I won't," playfully.

"Margaret!" said the deep voice.

"Miss Castlemaine, if you please, Mr. Dale."

"Margaret don't you wish this waltz would last forever ?"

"No indeed!" with emphasis

"And why not ?"

"I have promised the next to Mr. Graham—he waltzes superbly," said the sweet voice.

"Better than I do, no doubt," said the young man regretfully, feeling pained.

"No," softly.

"No ?"

"Not better—almost as well," said Margaret,

naively, and half involuntarily Cheston Dale drew her closer; the little admission had filled him with pleasure.

Later in the evening he met Margaret coming out of the conservatory. She did not see him. He heard her escort exclaim in broken tones,—

“And is that ‘no’ final?”

“It is final,” said the trembling voice.

Cheston noticed how pale the girl was; a look of pity and sorrow curved her sweet lips. He was soon hovering around her in a protecting fashion. The joy of the evening seemed to have vanished for Margaret; she was wistful and quiet. Cheston Dale's heart swelled with love as he looked at her.

He could not sleep that night, but restlessly wondered if Margaret would answer him so cruelly; but he refused to think of such a catastrophe, and fell at length into a troubled sleep, to dream that Margaret and he were separated by a heartless mother who had chosen another suitor for her daughter. He comforted himself the next day by the thought that Mrs. Castlemaine was not heartless, and that dreams are said to go by contraries.

“Cheston,” remarked his sister one evening, “I am of the opinion that Margaret goes out altogether too much; I met her to-day; it struck me that she was looking thin and pale.”

"She is very gay," observed the young man, quietly.

"Yes—and parties and late hours will wear upon the most robust," pursued Mrs. Vincy, "and Margaret, although not a bit delicate, is not remarkably robust. I must speak to Mrs. Castlemaine about it," adding, after a pause, "Do you know I heard some one prophesy that Miss Margaret Castlemaine would be engaged by the close of this, her first season."

The young man was silent ; his cheek colored with emotion ; before he could reply his sister continued.—

"The insufferable gossips mentioned the names of two or three whom they thought might stand an even chance of winning her favor. Yours was not among them," she added softly and rather timidly.

"And yet before the season closes, Margaret will find me at her feet !" exclaimed Cheston Dale, while a luminous expression stole into his fine eyes, and the flush deepened on his cheek.

"Cheston," cried his sister, "you must win her. You were made for one another !"

Tom Vincy's entrance changed the conversation, in which, let it be understood, Cheston took but little part, and when he did speak answered at random, drawing the attention of his brother-in-law upon him by his absent-minded replies.

"Old man, you're in love !" Tom announced, and Cheston roused himself and shook off his pleasant reverie.

It was at a musicale that the young man next saw Margaret Castlemaine. He was conversing with a witty and beautiful woman, but managing to keep an eye on the door, wondering restlessly what kept Margaret, when she entered with her usual quiet grace. Some one had spoken to her, and she had replied, and was smiling in an innocent fashion. Cheston thought he had never before seen her look so beautiful. But when the smile vanished he noticed her expression was one of sadness. It moved him powerfully ; he longed to drive it away.

She was soon surrounded by friends, and to less sympathetic eyes would have appeared happy enough. She greeted Cheston's approach with a bright smile, and for a time the shade of sadness seemed to quite leave her.

Later in the evening, as Cheston stood in the doorway, the man next him said to another,—

"Is not Miss Castlemaine lovely this evening ?"

"She is exquisite," replied the other, "but a trifle sad. Did you observe it ? I wonder if that young Thornby is not responsible for that ?"

"Thornby ?"

"Yes—he proposed to her, you know, and was refused."

"Foolish girl ! He is enormously wealthy."

"Yes ; but it seems Miss Castlemaine is a sensible girl, and looked at the man and not his wealth. Thornby, of course, did not come up to the mark, and she refused him. It seemed he raved and tore his hair in true melodramatic style, even threatening to put an end to his life if she would not have him. He made quite a scene, I believe."

"The cowardly puppy ! Fancy badgering a girl like Margaret Castlemaine !" cried the other, indignantly.

"She need not alarm herself ; he is too much of a coward to do himself serious injury. Upon my word, there he is now, looking remarkably well, too, considering the blow to his vanity. Ah, he has advanced to speak to her !"

But Cheston crossed the room and reached Margaret's side first. She took his arm with a smile of relief. He led her away, conflicting emotions rendering it difficult for him to speak.

With a little fluttering sigh the girl exclaimed,—

"Oh, how tired I am of it all !"

"Would you like to go home, Margaret ? I will take you there if you wish."

"Yes—take me home," she said, looking relieved. "But we must search for mamma."

That lady was soon found. The three had rather a silent ride home. Once there, Mrs.

Castlemaine mounted the stairs, and Cheston Dale followed Margaret into the drawing-room. A noble fire glowed in the grate, the tinted lamps shed forth an attractive light. With a sigh of relief Margaret sank into one of her favorite cushioned chairs, and Cheston exerted himself to amuse and divert her. He succeeded well ; her smiles returned, the old merry laugh rang out. But when at length he arose to go, the sober expression stole over Margaret's face. It touched Chester amazingly ; he had not meant to tell her of his so love soon, thinking she had excitement enough ; but he longed to comfort her, and with a sudden impulse went to her side and put his arm around her.

"You want to cry," he whispered, "and don't dare, even before your old friend, Cheston Dale. Margaret, I love you dearly !"

The answer to that was a shower of tears. Cheston noticed with delight that she did not shrink from him ; perhaps the protecting clasp of that strong arm around her comforted the girl. Her tears did not last long ; she was quiet for a moment, then made an effort to release herself, but Cheston held her fast.

"No, I cannot let you go, Margaret ; you must tell me that you love me, darling," in a half pleading, half wistful tone.

And somehow, although it cost her many

blushes, Margaret managed to confess that she did.

As Cheston's wife she is a great deal happier than when an acknowledged belle. She is the joy and delight of her husband's life, and that knowledge keeps Margaret supremely content.

THE END.

SILVER FALLS.

SILVER FALLS.



ONE fine summer morning several young people might have been seen wending their way along a country lane. They were pleasantly shielded from the sun by the trees bordering their path; just behind the line of trees stretched a meadow, brilliant with summer sunshine, while beyond rose lofty mountains whose peaks towered up to a dizzy height.

The party of pedestrians consisted of Miss Theo Willoughby and her brother Jack, Miss Marion Grey, a cousin of the Willoughbys, and Lawrence Classen, whose country home stood near the Willoughbys' pretty villa. Said Theo, joyously,—

“We could scarcely have chosen a finer day for our walk to Silver Falls.”

“A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,
And waves of shadow went over the wheat.”

“See how the sunbeams dance and flicker over that maple tree,” remarked Lawrence.

“Yes; I wish mamma were here to enjoy it all with us,” and a shade fell over Theo's pretty face.

"It seemed a shame to leave her alone; she certainly looked rather solitary as she stood waving a good-by to us on the veranda."

"Please don't look so disturbed, Miss Theo," returned Classen, "for I happen to know that your mother spends the morning at our house."

"Oh, then she will not have a chance to feel lonely!" exclaimed Theo in relieved tones. "I'm so glad I spoke, for I was beginning to reproach myself."

Lawrence looked down at the "star-sweet face" with a smile, and said,—

"Does not some writer tell us that by giving voice to our troubles we frequently lessen them?"

"I think so—I am aware it was so in this instance; and yet if we would keep our friends happy and cheerful, don't you think it wiser not to give voice to every petty annoyance?"

"It is nobler, and I am sure the world would be a happier place to live in if all were to bear that in mind," returned the young man. "But notice that group of pine trees—how heavily clad the branches are; it is always twilight through those branches."

"There is something very stately about a pine tree," said Jack Willoughby, chancing to over hear his friend's remark.

"Sombre, too, don't you think so, Marion?" observed Theo, "particularly as night steals on.

That fine maple tree just beyond will present a gorgeous appearance when the leaves begin to change; we must take this walk in autumn."

"I shan't be with you then, puss," said Marion. "Mother and Jen are beginning to write very impatient letters—they want me home again."

"They must spare you quite a while longer," said Theo; and then a wayside blossom attracted her attention, and after gathering that, a bank of ferns must be inspected, while some of the choicest were carefully plucked, making a graceful appearance against the delicate blue dress, which so admirably became Theo.

Their pathway was soon joined by the river; it came rapidly around a curve, and swept along smoothly and impetuously.

"I always like the landscapes just here," said Theo, in a soft, contended voice.

"The recent heavy rain has increased the volume of water," observed Lawrence. "Did you hear the rain night before last?" It fell heaviest at midnight."

"Yes, it woke me. I looked out on the storm. What a wild night it was! The wind was blowing a gale, bending and twisting the great trees about, and driving the rain against the window pane until the casement rattled and shook. Then," with a little laugh, "the blind came banging to—it startled me. I was glad to see the moon peep

through a rift in the clouds—full moon, you know. It tooked so jolly and smiling that I smiled too, at my foolish fear, and soon after feel asleep.”

“When frightened, you should always try to think of something decidedly jolly. For instance, recall that cold winter evening when in the ball-room all was light, warmth and happiness, for you and me, at least, for we both voted that the best evening of the entire winter. I refer to Mrs. Marchmont’s german.”

“Oh, yes!” cried Theo, with a smiling recollective glance.

“It seemed to me,” continued Lawrence, in his softest tones, “that my partner was just the very nicest girl in the whole world. But there! I need not speak in the past tense, need I, Theo?”

A delicious blush answered this daring little speech, and Theo’s shyness was so pretty to behold that the young man found his heart beginning to beat thick and fast. But Miss Willoughby rallied and tried to act as though her cheeks were quite cool. She was soon chatting in a light hearted fashion, while Classen watched her with heart in his eyes, feeling that his unspoken love was difficult to conceal; she liked him as comrade and friend—that was all.

The swift river as it slid along made a murmuring melody; the ripples of light on its surface sparkled in the sunlight, giving life and variety to

the landscape. It was impossible for Lawrence to brood long or sadly with Theo by his side, so, casting his doubts to the wind, the young man gave himself up to the delight of the moment. On the opposite bank of the river mowers were swinging their scythes and calling to one another in cheery tones. To take just such a walk, on just such a day, with Theo, meant happiness—complete. Lawrence found himself watching the bonny face with a sensation of blissful content. There was always something so restful in being near Theo; her unshadowed smile and gladness warmed his heart.

“Blithe as the first blithe birds when Spring awakens.”

It often seemed to the young man that that line must have been written for his little friend.

His love for her, too, made him richer in all things. In the world’s busy mart he found himself infinitely stronger, more capable, than of old. I think he tried to do his best in all that he undertook, placing his standard high for Theo’s sweet sake, the girl whose lovable nature and numberless little acts of kindness and self-denial had won upon him so.

“I must take you for a walk to Lake Calm, Theo; don’t let me forget it when we reach home,” said Marion Grey.

Lawrence looked puzzled, and said—

"I don't remember such a lake in this region, Miss Marion."

"Oh, it's miles away from here, near my home, Mr. Classen; you know I am going to run away with Theo—steal her from you all," returned Marion; and then she and Jack resumed their conversation.

"When does your cousin leave here, Miss Theo?" questioned the young man, quietly.

"Next week at the very latest she says; she cannot possibly remain away from home any longer, although I wish her to prolong her visit. I shall miss her when she goes."

"Ah! then you do not intend to let her run away with you."

"I have not quite decided," said Theo, doubtfully. "What would you do? I am happy here; although Cousin Marion finds the place quiet; I like the quiet. Marion promises me a round of tennis matches, garden parties and informal dances."

Miss Grey overheard her cousin's remark, for she called back,—

"Please tell Theo that she needs a change of scene, Mr. Classen; I am very anxious to carry her home with me."

"To send her back with pale cheeks?" put in Jack. "She does not look as though she needed a change."

"You are right," said Lawrence, speaking as though he meant what he said.

"Both traitors!" exclaimed Miss Grey, laughingly. "But, there! don't listen to them, Theo, my child. I have a lot of nice friends whom I wish you to meet, notably a Mr. Victor Thorne, who plays deliciously upon the piano; he can improvise, too—when he is in the mood for it. He would surely fall in love with you, you are such an impressionable, sensitive little thing. He has fallen in love with your picture already, saw it on a stand in the reception room. He just poured over it until we began to tease him, then he went to the piano, and I never heard him play so well. His eyes would haunt you—deep-set, you know, and very black.'

"And does he wear his jetty locks long, and toss them back as he seats himself at the piano?" queried Jack.

"I shan't gratify your idle curiosity," cried Marion, half playfully, and half provoked at something in Jack's tone.

"Oh, then, he does! I know the type—a woe-begone, looking fellow whom all the girls rave over, but who has not the faculty of impressing the young men as favorably."

"Perhaps they are jealous of his popularity," said Marion, saucily. "Then, Theo, I want you to meet a poet whom I know. Such a delightful

man! He would surely write a sonnet to your eyes. Oh, you must let me take you home with me, we'll have such gay, good times together! Just tell me you'll go! Seriously, I want you—I can't leave you behind. I shall enjoy everything ever so much more if you are only there to enjoy it with me."

A conclusion some one else in the party had recently arrived at concerning Miss Theo. Indeed, Lawrence Classen found himself feeling rebellious. He was angry with Marion that she should leave Theo's picture where all might scan it. Would they take Theo away from him—his pretty Theo, whom he dreamed of at night and worshipped by day?

He glanced at his little comrade; she was looking blithe and bonny; no racking care such as disturbed his peace of mind was troubling her. Would she leave them all without a pang—be glad to go away?

"How long would you stay," Classen asked, abruptly, so abruptly that the girl stared at him with sweet, half bewildered eyes. "With your cousin," he supplemented, speaking more quietly.

"Oh! I was thinking of some thing else—of the splendid bunch of wild flowers I must gather for the dining room. I'll collect ferns and flowers for it as we go along. If I go with Cousin Marion, I'll stay a week or two, I suppose."

"A lifetime!" thought the young man hopelessly. "So much may happen in two weeks."

"You must remain with me a month—at least a month, Theo," said Marion, who had taken her place at Theo's side just then. "I want you for the tableaux; they are to be on a grand scale. We have been planning the costumes for months."

"Seriously, cousin, I shall not be able to go with you just now. Papa is in Europe, you know; the house would seem too lonely for mama. I can't leave her," said Theo.

"And your father does not return until fall, eh? Why, child, your mother will have Jack to relieve the solitude. I want to take you away from this quiet place—it's only right you should see my new home. I am sure you will like it—you certainly seemed to admire the photographs Hal took of it.

"Oh, I did, ever so much! I'll see it all some day."

"Then you really mean to let me go home without you?"

"I am afraid I must. I am sure I must," said Theo. "You can write and tell me all about the tableaux and the garden parties, you know, Marion."

"Not a line! There! don't speak to me—I'm angry with you!" and Marion left her cousin's side and joined Jack.

"She does not mean it," said Theo. "Marion is too good natured to cherish anger long. Oh, what a glorious spray of clematis, so snowy and full! See, the vine has twined itself closely around that fine, tall tree—there's a brook just near that rock. If I stood on tip toe I could not reach that spray, but will you gather it for me, Mr. Classen?"

"With a great deal of pleasure," said the young man, and his joyous light-heartedness spoke in the tones of his deep voice.

Theo glanced at her friend, wondering what could make him look so radiant when only a few moments ago he had appeared graver than she had ever seen him.

"This spray?"

"Yes, please. Isn't it fine? And so sweet!"

"Now we must leave this road for a narrow footpath through the woods," remarked Classen. "Ah, your brother Jack is leading us off in the right direction—he has not forgotten."

"Oh, he's an excellent guide," said the girl.

"Look, Theo, at that tall, very slender evergreen tree—it resembles a church spire as it points toward

"The summer sky
Tasselled with clouds light woven by the sun.'"

The air was spicy with fragrance; a brooding quiet enwrapped the thicket, save when the breeze

came whispering through the tree-tops. It was certainly a wild and romantic region through which the winding path, led our little party. The sun peeped brightly through the trees, kissing Theo's cheek and lingering in a loving fashion on her curly, uncovered head. Then, as the trees grew more closely together, the saucy sun was not permitted to catch a glimpse of the four friends with their merry voices and gay repartee.

"A very picturesque walk, Classen," said Jack. "Notice those tall rocks, almost like young cliffs."

"And see the moss clinging to them," observed Marion; and way up, over the edge of that high ledge, I see a small blue flower peeping down at me."

"It has chosen a lonely spot for its home," remarked Lawrence.

"It has indeed," returned Miss Grey, "and it reminds me of Theo—she ought not to spend the entire summer here. I declare it's a shame to hide her away so, Jack!"

"I have not a word to say against the villa—that is charming. I wish I could pick it up and place it next our house."

"Now, Marion," cried Theo, laughingly, "please don't abuse our country home."

"I have not a word to say against the villa—that is charming. I wish I could pick it up and place it next our home."

"I think my mother and myself would have something to say to that," exclaimed Lawrence Classen. "We should all miss the glimpses that we catch at evening of the lights shining through the trees."

"Oh, I dare say you would," said Marion, saucily; and then, chancing to meet his eye, she gave Lawrence such a merry, comprehending glance that the young man knew his secret had been read. Both with one impulse glanced at Theo Willoughby; her white hat hung on her arm, the clear hazel eyes wore a look of happy content—it seemed to Classen that she had never looked more lovable.

Perhaps Marion thought so too, for slipping her arm around her cousin, she kept her for some time by her side. As the two girls walked along they chatted merrily. Lawrence was rather silent. A noisy little brook came tripping through the trees to meet them; its voice was so saucy that Marion was delighted.

"I wish we had just such a brook near Courtley Villa," she said.

"I have captured many a wary trout in this very brook—just above here," said Jack Willoughby.

"Oh, have you?" exclaimed Miss Grey. "I love to fish. Can we have some sport before I return home?"

"Yes, but please don't do as Theo did, cry bitterly for the fish when you have been fortunate enough to catch it; she actually made me toss the fine trout back to its home under the willows." And Jack, who was an expert at luring the finny tribe toward the hook, gave his sister a half-loving, half-impatient glance.

"Oh, how provoked Jack was!" laughed Theo. "I never before came so near getting a lecture from him! In fact he did scold—with his eyes! Really, you did, Jack! I'll never go fishing again—it is not pleasant sport. Are we half way there—to the falls?"

"More than half way, dear."

"Are you tired?" asked Lawrence Classen. "Now I propose that we all rest under that fine old tree—the variegated moss is spread like a rich carpet, and the branches afford ample shade."

After all were seated Miss Grey commenced humming a song, a favorite with them all. They joined her and sang for a while, gliding from one melody to another, the voices blending sweetly and harmoniously; then Lawrence said,—

"Oh, happy summer days! How blest to be freed from the rigid restraints of a large city! See this woodland flower; the very manner in which it drops its sweet head lends it a grace unknown to the cultivated beauties that are arranged with an eye for effect in garden or conservatory."

The west wind came stealing through the forest; it fluttered the ribbon at Marion's belt and gently lifted the soft love locks that rested so lightly on Theo's white brow. A pair of fine gray eyes were gazing at Theo; the girl blushed, she scarcely knew why, and commenced fingering the jewels that glistened on Marion's hand.

"Why do you not wear my ring, cousin, the slender ring you borrowed for a guard?" she said.

"I haven't it. Besides, my fingers were growing too plump for the tiny thing," returned Marion.

"But where is it?"

"It will surprise you to hear. Why, Frank Castleton has it—he stole it from me and now wears it on his watch-chain. There! don't look so startled and annoyed. Let me tell you how it happened. You know I always remove my rings before putting on my gardening gloves—I slip them all on this gold chain. Well, one morning after an hour's steady gardening I was seated on the veranda, resting. Frank Castleton was seated by my side; he noticed the cluster of rings on my chain, and asked if he might examine them. I gave them all to him. Last of all he bent over your gold ring. 'How tiny it is,' he said. 'I did not know that you could wear such a small ring, Miss Grey.' 'It is rather small for me, I

must return it to its owner, you have met her—Miss Theo Willoughby,' He looked surprised, then suddenly slipped the ring on his watch-chain. I remonstrated, but he assured me that it was safer with him—I should not wear a ring too small for me, and that he would return it to you in the fall. I meant to say more, when Louise came flying out upon the veranda; her pet canary had escaped from its cage, We were all the morning trying to coax Goldie from the tree to his cage, And your ring? My child, I came here a day or two after, and did not see Frank again. He joined a yatching party, I believe. They are cruising about and having a grand time, I hear. But I promise you faithfully, pet, that I'll get that ring of yours from him when I go home."

"I certainly hope that you will, Marion," remarked Theo. "How very blue the sky looks through those branches."

Lawrence Classen glanced up with such a very grave pair of eyes that Theo's sweet face fell, and a subdued expression chased away the sudden happy smile. Then the young man roused himself, and was soon as merry as the rest.

Once again the little party were in motion, and as the path led them still deeper into the gloom of the forest, the hush and charmed stillness was felt by all. The ground was thickly strewn with

acorns and pines cones, while far ahead and on all side, stretched a perfect wilderness of boughs and interlacing branches. Again, and again Lawrence was obliged to hold aside a branch that quite intercepted their pathway. Theo glanced about her, noticing the shapes of the various trees—the promising young sapling and the more imposing monarchs of the forest; but Lawrence's gaze fell oftenest upon his blithe companion.

“Graceful she was as some slim marsh flower shaken,
Among the shallows in the breezy spring.”

At length the dense thicket was left behind them, and a smiling meadow met their view, studded thickly with yellow dandelions and white-fingered daisies. A narrow strip of woodland, and then began the steep descent to Silver Falls. Both girls needed some assistance. Jack Willoughby guided his cousin, and Miss Theo found Classen's strong hand a great help. Down, down they carefully made their way, and at length the sound of the falls reached their ears. Winding about, always descending, the party finally came around a bend that brought the falls in full view. Silver Falls had been well named, for against the dark background of moss and wild looking trees it fell in a silvery stream, sending up a mist-like spray, delicate as a fairy's bridal veil. Otherwise the place presented a desolate, solitary appearance; huge rocks and boulders were scattered about

the bank of the stream that fled away so swiftly out of sight.

Theo and Marion seated themselves upon a rock and looked up at the cascade that fell to the ground with so much force and precipitancy.

"Please make a sketch of it, Mr. Classen," said Theo, impulsively.

"Shall I? I brought my sketching block along with me. You look rather subdued, Miss Theo, does the loneliness of the place oppress you?"

"Just a little, perhaps," acknowledged the girl; and then she wandered off with her cousin.

She returned at length to see how Lawrence was progressing with his sketch. To her delight it promised to turn out a decided success, so, fearing her presence might disturb him, Miss Wilmoughby wandered off again, gathering ferns and yellow lilies.

Lawrence at length looked around for her; she had quite disappeared, and Jack and Marion were no longer in sight; he could hear their voices afar off; was Theo with them? He would look for her. Hastily putting a few finishing touches on his sketch, he pocketed it and started off in search of Theo. He soon found her and in tears.

"Oh, the poor birds!" she cried. "Only see what the storm has done! It has snapped this branch off—the branch that held this pretty nest.

And these two young birds, they are quite, quite dead."

"Shall we dig a grave for them? Would it comfort you?" asked Classen, kneeling by Theo's side.

"Yes, oh, yes! I meant to do that. Poor lifeless birdlings! The fury of the storm, was too much for them. And think of the desolate mother bird!"

"I know—it is very sad—but please don't cry any more child."

The answer to that was a long drawn sigh; then Theo dried her eyes, and the two prepared a resting place for the tiny birds, covering the little mound with a strip of moss.

For a moment both stood surveying their work, then Lawrence said cheerily,—

"Come, look up and let me see your face brighten. I feel as if the sun had gone under a cloud."

Theo looked up then and tried to smile; it was not much of a success as smiles go, but it was the very best she could manage to give him just then. Suddenly a pair of strong arms were around her, and an eager voice was saying,—

"My child, I love you with all my heart! Do you love me?"

It was very sudden, and Theo Willoughby turned as pale as a lily, and trembled exceedingly.

I have startled you exclaimed Lawrence very tenderly. But that brave little smile went to my heart."

A pair of wistful eyes were watching Theo, and when she noticed the anxious love written all over Classen's handsome face her courage returned, and with it a blush, faint and tender as the dawn. Perhaps Lawrence read in that blush the answer he longed for, for he bent his head and whispered,—

"Mine, all mine, for ever and ever!"

And Theo did not contradict him.

THE END.

ONE JUNE DAY.

ONE JUNE DAY.



IT was one of those entrancing days when the sun-light seems to throw a spell of enchantment upon everything that it touches; the shadows of the rosebushes upon the garden path were so clearly defined that one could trace the delicate outline of each leaf and twig. Song-birds were abroad; they trilled forth a most joyous lay, and then they soared from their perch up, up, up in a heaven-ward flight toward the blue dome flecked here and there with snowy cloudlets.

A butterfly, with wings the color of sunshine, was enjoying an airy swing upon a rose laden branch swayed to and fro by the balmy summer breeze. As Kitty Carrolton watched him she half envied the blithe insect his pleasant pastime. She wondered if the humming-birds and bees did not dearly love this month—the month of June.

A lady came down the garden path, and Kitty bounded forward to meet her, exclaiming,—

“Oh, Aunt Mae, I’m so glad you came out! Last night’s shower has made everything look so

fresh and beautiful. See the full blown roses! They were only sleepy little buds, all curled up for a nap, yesterday afternoon."

"Look, Kitty," observed Miss Grantley. "As the sun touches those dew-drops they sparkle like precious jewels."

"I shook ever so many off when I pulled that rose. I don't believe the rosebush will thank me for that, but they fell upon dear little mignonette, who hadn't any," said Kitty.

Just then something fluttered up from a neighboring bush.

"Why, Kit, how startled you look!" smiled Aunt Mae. "That was only a bird, dear."

"He was so near that I heard the sound of his wings as flap, flap, flap they carried him far away," remarked Kitty.

"That reminds me of something I read in a book of travels," said Miss Grantley, as, with Kitty's hand resting upon her arm, they slowly sauntered along the sunny path. "The writer had encamped for the night upon the bank of a river; it was an exceedingly lonely place, with scarcely a sound to break the stillness. At times, however, a flock of wild geese, homeward bound, would speed away to roost in the fens, and the sharp beat of their wings upon the air was a musical sound, very much resembling the words, tiff-tiff-tiff-tiff, repeated rapidly in a whisper,

and lowering the voice as the sound dies away. Ah! what a fine morning this is, Kit! We must arrange to spend every minute of it out of doors. Would you and Jack like a walk in the woods?"

"I should dearly like to go," cried Kitty, in tones of satisfaction, "and I am almost sure Jack would like it, too."

"Very well, then, suppose we start soon, before the sun becomes more powerful."

"I'll find Jack, but first I must gather some roses for mamma; she likes tea-roses better than any other flower."

Away danced Kitty, her brown curls fluttering in the breeze.

A few moments later the little party started down the shady lane, followed by Frisk, a fine shepherd dog. It was utterly impossible for Jack and Kitty to walk sedately along; they resembled a couple of humming birds as they fluttered from this side of the road to that, pulling the wild flowers and peering up at the branches overhead in hopes of catching a glimpse of a bird's nest. The country lane, fringed with a tangle of bushes and shrubs, possessed a wonderful charm to the two children just set free from school and the restraints of city life. As Kitty's chatter was heard by a bird resting upon a twig, he cocked his little head upon one side and then piped forth a response; perhaps he thought she spoke his own

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sweet language, and so ventured a civil "good morning."

"Frisk enjoys it all as much as we do," said Jack, regarding his great shaggy playfellow with a smile.

"I'm glad Frisk is such a good friend of ours; it would hurt my feelings if he should bark at me and show his teeth, as he does when strangers go near him," remarked Kitty.

Just then Frisk looked up, and it seemed as if his honest brown eyes were beaming with goodwill and benevolence. Kit exclaimed,—

"Dear old fellow! I shall make him a necklace of daisies!"

"I hope you will be able to persuade Frisk to remain quiet long enough for you to fasten it about his neck," said Aunt Mae, regarding the dog as he capered about, with a doubtful smile.

"I'll steal up when he isn't looking," returned Kitty, pulling a number of good-sized daisies.

A few minutes later Jack came scampering down the steep bank.

"You're missing lots of fun, Kit, fussing over that necklace," he said breathlessly, "I looked into a bird's nest with five cute little blue eggs in it, and I found a great lump of gum upon a wild cherry tree."

"Aunt Mae," said Kitty, after a thoughtful pause, "I believe I won't finish this necklace now;

"I'll wait until we are in the woods; there won't be so much to see there."

"It would never do for you to make such a remark to a naturalist or a botanist, Kitty dear," smiled Miss Grantley. "Why, if you were to take a stick and draw a small circle almost anywhere in the woods, a student would find enough within that tiny ring to keep him occupied and interested for hours."

"Even if the ground was covered with dead leaves?" queried Jack.

"Yes—for then he could tell you just what trees those leaves fell from, or he might carefully brush them aside, and bring to light a delicate plant that was struggling up through the crevices of rocks.

"There is a great deal to learn in this world, isn't there, Aunt Mae?" asked Kitty, thoughtfully.

"Indeed there is, pet. "Why, it is said that Lyonnet, a famous naturalist, spent almost a lifetime studying a certain kind of butterfly; he counted all the muscles and nerves, and this required patience and perseverance."

"I should call him a man with a hobby shouldn't you, Aunt Mae?" exclaimed Jack.

"If butterflies have nerves, it must make them nervous to have the bloom rubbed off their pretty wings," observed Kitty.

"I should think it might," said Miss Grantley.

"Then I shan't ever catch another butterfly, for when you do catch them you can hardly help brushing off a little of the bloom. I never supposed they cared a bit about it." And Kitty looked grave, for she loved the butterflies that flitted so gayly amidst the roses.

"I should like to be a naturalist," said Jack. Would a common little bit of clover like this interest a naturalist, Aunt Mae? —

"Yes—he would tell you its botanical name, and could tell to what family it belonged, and a great deal about it."

"To think that the tiny clover leaf has relations!" observed Kit. She was silent for a few moments, then said, "Well, if I were clover I should like to have all my dear relations growing close beside me, mamma and papa, and Jack, and oh, I should want you near, Aunt Mae, so that I could kiss you and hug you." And Kit gave her aunt an embrace as an illustration. "Ah, here we are at the woods at last!"

"Suppose we follow this little foot-path, children?" suggested Aunt Mae.

Shade and sunlight made a lovely contrast in those stately woods; it was just the place to wander about at one's own idle will. Occasionally a tuneful bird-note echoed through the forest hush; there was a wild sweetness in the air.

Crunch, crunch, crunch, fell the footsteps upon the dead leaves and boughs, that had been dislodged by last winter's nipping frosts. Kit and Jack danced along, while their eager eyes found plenty to comment upon, indeed Kitty's daisy chain hung forgotten over her arm until an impertinent bramble-bush gave a little snatch at it.

"Please don't stop me, bramble," exclaimed Kit. "You can't have the flower necklace, and if I lose sight of Aunt Mae and Jack I might not find them again." And away she darted, and was soon beside the others.

At length the little party reached a spot so beautiful to behold that each exclaimed in delight. A broad spreading tree towered above its neighbors most majestically, the carpet beneath was of the loveliest shaded moss, gray, pale green and pearly white, blended most harmoniously; delicate woodland flowers raised their pretty faces to the sunlight that fell in flickering patches through the boughs overhead; a noisy brook babbled near.

"I propose that we stay here—we can't find a pleasanter spot," cried Jack.

So all seated themselves under the oak tree. Aunt Mae opened her sketch book; a fallen tree with the bark peeling off its trunk had attracted her fancy.

“Kit, suppose you and I search for that noisy little brook? I am thirsty,” suggested Jack, springing up.

Kitty followed him, remarking that it was a pity they hadn’t a cup from which to drink.

“Here we are at the brook; it is as clear as crystal,” said Jack. “Let us search for the very largest leaf we can find; a leaf makes a famous good cup, Kitty.”

A moment later Jack knelt beside the chattering stream; he closed one end of the leaf he had found, then, filling it with water, said,—

“There, Kit, taste that.”

His sister pronounced the water very cold and delicious. They had scarcely satisfied their thirst when Frisk came crashing through the branches and bushes, dashed toward the brook, and drank of its clear water with evident relish.

“It is well you gave us first chance, Frisk,” laughed Kitty. “Why, how thirsty he must have been, Jack! Oh, look up in that tree! There’s a great gray squirrel looking down at us!”

“Where? I can’t see him, Kit,” replied Jack, peering anxiously up.

“On that longest limb,” whispered Kit.

“I see him now. He’s a beauty, with his smooth satin coat and fine bushy tail; his skin would make you a nice hat, Kit.”

"Oh, the darling! I wouldn't harm him for worlds! How can people shoot squirrels, Jack?"

"Ah, he is off like a flash!" said Jack, with a prolonged sigh.

"Do you suppose he lives in that tree?" queried Kit.

"Perhaps—or he may live a mile off, squirrels can travel over much ground in short time."

"Perhaps he was only visiting a friend," mused Kit. "Perhaps when he saw two giants under the tree looking up at him he changed his mind, and instead of calling on his friends scampered for home. I should hardly blame him if he heard you say his skin would make me a nice hat. I hope he heard my answer, too."

"Squirrels cannot understand our language. Hallo, there's a snail! He certainly doesn't look very intelligent—at least his house doesn't. We can't see him; I suppose he's asleep inside."

"Of course he is. I should think he would need to sleep pretty often; it must be tiresome to carry a house around wherever you go," said Kit.

"He never has to pay board bills," laughed Jack. "He owns his house, just as papa owns ours."

"But he must always live in one house," cried Kit, "and I should think he would find it lonely living all alone, shouldn't you?"

"When he feels lonely he comes out, I suppose," replied Jack.

"He couldn't give a party in his house if he wanted to ever so much," laughed Kit; "he could give a lawn party, though, I suppose."

"And when all the guests were assembled it would look like quite a little village," said Jack, "for of course they bring their houses with them."

I wonder if the dull snail heard the children's merry laughter?

"And then," continued Kit, "if he finds the affair dull, he can creep back into his house and take a nap; but he must not think of doing such a thing if visitors are talking to him, even if they are very tiresome—as tiresome as Miss Marsh, our arithmetic teacher—for that would be impolite. Well, good-by old snail! You don't look very jolly. I expect you feel sleepy enough. Let's go back to Aunt Mae, now, Jake."

Springing lightly over the rocks, the two children soon reached their aunt's side.

"Now I must work at this necklace for Frisk in earnest," said Kit. "I think I'll arrange it just like mamma's diamond necklace, with the largest daisies in the centre."

"Scamp—I mean Frisk—will feel vain when decorated with daisies," remarked Miss Grantley, working away at her sketch.

"I don't believe he'll care much about it; he'll give one wild toss to his head and scatter the daisies all about him. Do you suppose his neck is half a yard around?"

"Just about, I should think," said Aunt Mae.

"I'll measure and find out," said Jack.

"Take this ribbon, then," suggested Kitty.

After considerable chasing about Jack succeeded in convincing Frisk that this was not a game of tag; the frolicsome dog stood still for a second and then whisked away.

"How long is this ribbon? It just meets around his neck," said Jack.

Aunt Mae measured.

"It is just half a yard, Kitty."

Kit took the ribbon, and said after a moment,—

"The necklace is more than half done."

There was silence for a time, then Kitty said,—

"Aunt Mae, wouldn't this place make a nice ball-room for fairies? They could dance upon this pretty, mossy carpet in the moonlight; these small blue flowers look like cups; the fairies could drink the dew from them, and the gay group of columbines growing on the edge of that rock would decorate their ball-room nicely. I think these tiny blue flowers are too pretty to pick—they look so sociable growing together."

"They are very graceful," replied Aunt Mae. "Notice how very slender the long stem that supports them is, Kitty."

"I should think the first storm would snap those stems in two."

"The fibres are too closely woven and pliable for that, dear. Delicate and fragile as that tiny plant looks, you would find it better able to resist a storm than the gay tulip that lifts its haughty head so proudly and so confidently."

"I like this wild flower the best; tulips make a great show, but I should never think of loving a tulip," said Kit, thoughtfully.

Jack re-appeared with a fine cane which he had cut from a young tree. Kitty admired it immensely, and decided to keep a sharp look-out on the way home for a similar treasure.

Aunt Mae had finished her sketch; it was very cleverly done, and the children said that they would enjoy looking at it when cold winter had taken them back to the city, and their country home was only a delightful memory.

Thus with merry chatter the gay morning hours slipped away, and at length Miss Grantley said it was time to start for home; so once more the little party was in motion, followed by Frisk, looking very grand in his necklace of daisies.

A fine little squirrel, whose home was in the very tree under which they all had been seated, darted

out of his place of concealment and followed the merry trio with his bright eyes. I cannot say whether he had heard all that had been said by them, but I do know that he remained motionless and intent until the sound of the laughing voices could be heard no more, and there was nothing to break the forest hue.

THE END.

DAISY'S WHIM.

DAISY'S WHIM.



JACK CLINTON'S frank face wore a troubled look, a tender, half-sorrowful expression curved his firm lips; he walked slowly over the soft grass, his eyes bent upon the ground, his hands clasped behind him.

"And so little Daisy ran away from me a pet!" mused he. "However, it would be sheer madness to allow her to ride behind her cousin's frisky young horses. I should hesitate to ride with him myself. The man must be reckless to risk his own life as he does. Daisy shall not go with him if I can possibly prevent it."

Jack and Daisy had been engaged just one month, a month of brightest sunshine, but now a little cloud had appeared. Wilfred Jamieson had written Daisy, asking if he might not some day drive down on his drag from the city—would she not go with him and his sister Florence for a drive? And Daisy Chester had written yes, and appointed a day and hour.

But lo! when she told Mr. Jack of it he had remonstrated.

"Don't go, Daisy, dear," urged he, gently, "only last week those horses of his came near smashing his cart into bits. I don't trust them."

"But I want to go, Jack, and I wrote him that I would," replied Miss Daisy.

"Tell him that you have changed your mind, dear," said Jack very earnestly, and taking in his own a little dimpled hand.

"But I *haven't* changed my mind—not in the least bit!" with emphasis. "I would love to ride with my cousins here. I often do in the city, you know."

"Not with those horses, and not since you belonged to me, sweetheart," in a tender, half-masterful fashion.

Daisy resented it and drew away the hand he held.

"I'm going, Jack," she said, in her soft, positive voice; "it would be nonsensical to give it up."

Jack Clinton looked down at her in silence, until she flushed, but said: "I mean it, Jack, dear," nodding her curly head. "Its *perfectly* safe. Cousin Wilfred understands driving, you know, and I hear these horses are perfect little beauties."

"Pretty is as pretty does," returned Jack Clinton, very gravely. "I am afraid, Daisy, my child, you must give up this drive. I should blame myself exceedingly if I allowed you to go."

"Allow!" cried Daisy Chester, drawing herself up to her full height—just five feet, two inches. "Mr. Clinton, this is too much!" and turning abruptly, she was about to leave him, but Jack caught her in his arms.

"Little one, we must not quarrel," he said, very tenderly.

"Then Jack," very coaxingly, and lifting a face as fresh and innocent as a daisy's to his, "there, Jack, don't be so foolish."

"Am I foolish, love?"

She nodded her sunny head saucily. "Very, very foolish!" she said, emphasizing each word.

"But, darling," speaking gravely and very gently, "is it strange that I should hesitate to have my little girl risk her precious life? I am not anxious without cause, I can assure you."

"Yes you are, you dear, ridiculous old fellow," half-lovingly, half-laughingly, "but I shall not humor you."

"Yes you will, Daisy," very earnestly and persuasively. "Come, listen to reason."

"Set me the example, then," saucily, and tilting her pretty head on one side to look up at him through laughing, half-shut saucy eyes, "and you're jealous just as you were once before we were engaged, and I danced three dances with Cousin Wilfred. Oh, how disconsolate you were!" she laughed gleefully at the remem-

brance. Jack smiled as he kissed the up-turned face.

"Let us see if we cannot arrange it, pet," he said. "You may spend the day in any other way you like. We'll drive all over the country if you say so."

"And leave my guest to entertain themselves? Well, that would be hospitable, indeed! Besides, I can drive with you any day, you know," with a pout. Jack was offended.

"What's the matter?" asked Daisy, opening her eyes. "Oh, how funny you look—there's a great ugly rinkle between your eyes. What's the matter, Jack?"

"Daisy, do you love me, dear?"

The little witch put on a considering look. "Do I? Let me think—what did I say a month ago, dear boy?"

"That you loved me more dearly than any one else on this broad earth," promptly.

How she flushed.

"Oh, Jack!" looking shy, but laughing too, "I don't remember saying quite that."

"Well, you did; those were your very words, my lady," returned Jack. "Say them again, pet," coaxingly.

"Once is quite sufficient," hanging her little head.

"Then say 'I love you, Jack.'"

"No. What nonsense that would be!"

"Nonsense?" wrinkling his brown in a frown.

"Oh, dont look so! I love you, Jack," cried Daisy, in comical haste, and then they both laughed, and Jack thought such a pretty speech deserved a kiss.

"And now say: 'I will give up the ride for Jack's sake; he knows best,'" continued Clinton, persuasively.

"He don't," said Daisy, in a whisper to herself.

"What's that?" stooping his head to catch the words.

"Nothing," very innocently. Jack smiled.

"Come, Daisy," cheerfully.

"No," shaking her head.

"Be reasonable, love."

"I am," said Daisy, in her bird-like voice.

"Pardon me—but—sweetheart, you are not—I am waiting for that promise, pet," patiently.

Daisy reached up and plucked a spray of honey-suckle, and held it and admired it, and seemed to forget Jack. The birds twittered in the trees, a butterfly fluttered past them. Daisy leaned against the piazza rail, and wished, in her soft little heart, Jack would be "reasonable." At length she said: "Oh, dear!" and sighed dolefully. "Jack won't speak to me—he's mad."

"No, he isn't—he's trying to be patient, that's all, darling," getting hold of her little hand.

"We should all learn patience," observed Daisy, demurely casting down her eyes.

"Saucy girl!" exclaimed Jack, pressing a kiss upon the small hand he held—the hand upon which flashed their engagement ring.

"Jack," said Daisy, solemnly, "I would promise, but it would be a very bad beginning—you would wish to control everything. I have read of such people. You know 'it is the first step that counts,' dear," looking wise and charming.

"Then take that step, Daisy, my love."

"I *am* taking it, dear boy."

"Don't go, childie," in a tender, beseeching tone.

"I have promised to go," persistently.

Jack lost his patience then. He let the little hand drop from his clasp; he turned from her. The action hurt Daisy cruelly, and sobbing audibly she ran from him into the house and up the stairs. Ten minutes and no Daisy—in vain he watched for the flutter of the white dress. And thus it happened, sorrowfully and thoughtfully Jack Clinton walked home over the fields. The dandelions and buttercups looked up into a grave, half-wistful face. In a word, Jack was thoroughly miserable.

He loved Daisy Chester with all the strength of his generous, noble heart. It grieved him sorely that he must cross her; it pained him to think that he had brought tears to her laughing eyes. He had never known Daisy to cry. She seemed to him the embodiment of sunshine. He longed to take her in his arms and comfort her. Then he smiled to himself.

"Evidently she fancies it is all jealousy. She wished to begin right. What a dear child she is! I have no doubt my request seems absurd to her. I wish I could impress upon her that there is real danger. The horses are not half broken in. All Wilfred's friends are advising him to get rid of them, or he'll break his own neck. The fellow is reckless, and has been so ever since Daisy promised herself to me; but then he always drove frisky horses."

In the gloaming of the summer day Jack Clinton crossed the fields again. Daisy was singing at the piano. He thought the sweet voice sounded plaintive. She was crooning "The Long, Long, Weary Day."

"He said for me thou shalt be weeping.
When I shall be far away at some future day."

The soft voice faltered. He stepped through the long window. Daisy was leaning her head upon her hand in a forlorn fashion. She started as she heard his step, but looked up with a tiny smile

through the tears. Stooping he gave her the usual welcoming kiss and embrace.

"Good evening, little girl, singing all alone by yourself in the twilight?"

"All alone," replied the soft voice.

"You are missing the moon—it is worth seeing."

Catching up a fluffy white shawl from a chair he wrapped her in it. Placing the little hand upon his arm, he led her out. She had always liked the nice, protecting, manly way Jack had; to-night it seemed doubly pleasant to her.

"Let us walk up and down the verandah," suggested he. They paused at one of the parlor windows to speak to Mrs. Chester. For a time conversation was lively and animated. They resumed their walk.

"Hear the whip-poor-will," said the girl, "how lonely his cry is. It makes me sad, Jack," plaintively.

"My sunny-faced darling," getting hold of her hand, "I cannot picture you sad!" But he noticed, as the moonlight fell upon it, that the upturned face lacked its usual joyous expression. It grieved him. He missed the shy smile. Impulsively he exclaimed: "Daisy, we must never disagree again!"

"No, Jack," faintly.

"And for my sake will you give up the ride?"

"Jack, I can't ; it would hurt my cousin's feelings," faltered Daisy, thinking of the girl in the book she had been reading, who was finally afraid to express an opinion of her own on any subject.

"And how about my feelings, little Daisy?" in a voice of gentle rebuke.

Daisy flushed and dropped her head, then rallying she clasped both hands over Jack's arm and raised a face bewitchingly fair and coaxing : "Jack, let me have my own way, please."

How hard it was for him to withstand her. He paused, then he sighed and replied :

"My wilful darling ! I leave the matter entirely in your hands. I have said all I shall say now. If my Daisy is tired of life and wishes to run the risk of losing it, by riding behind Jamieson's half-tamed colts, I suppose I cannot prevent it." His voice was subdued and a little sad. It touched the young girl.

"What a long day this has been," she remarked.

"How would you fancy living in Norway, then?" asked Jack, to divert her, for she looked woefully pale. "The longest day there is three months; some of the nights just as long."

"What a traveller you have been Jack," said Daisy, with secret pride in her lover. "Just think of staying a whole month in that strange country. How could you do it?"

"I assure you I enjoyed myself immensely, but I felt pretty well turned around. I was never tired admiring the Aurora, however."

"Is it very beautiful Jack?" looking up at him.

"The colors are very fine. It is shaped, you know, like a fan, but a more remarkable fan you cannot easily imagine. It is a wonderful phenomena."

"And that is all the light the inhabitants are blessed with for months together?" exclaimed Daisy, in a voice of pity. "Oh, Jack, I shouldn't like it!"

"They do; they are so thoroughly accustomed to it. It is not very dense, for I frequently observed stars shining through it. The effect of the luminous arch at its brightest, and as I was fortunate in seeing it, is very brilliant, green, violet, purple, or a rose color, make the rays beautiful indeed to behold."

"What do you suppose occasions it, Jack?"

"That is a question which has not yet been solved, dear, but the general belief is that it is caused by electricity, the rays, you know, are only about eighty or ninety miles above the earth's surface."

"What an ignoramous I am!" exclaimed Daisy. "I always supposed the Aurora was up in the sky, just as the moon and the stars are. It is in the atmosphere, then?"

"Yes, and is not at all affected by the motion of the earth."

"Jack, there is a great deal to learn in this world, isn't there?" with a little sigh.

"Travel is the pleasantest manner of acquiring information," replied the young man. "You and I must cross the Atlantic some day, my little one."

Daisy blushed and said in a soft little voice : "Must we, Jack?" because she felt she must say something.

"My Daisy would like Italy's sunny clime. We will visit the palace at Versailles, the park would charm you, its shrubbery is so beautiful. And some day your mother, upon taking up the morning paper, would read, 'Mr. and Mrs. J. Clinton registered at Paris.' You shall see Venice by moonlight."

"Jack, how would I look in a gondola?" putting her head upon one side. "I can't imagine myself in one. What letters I should write to mamma. How very learned they would sound! Oh, Jack, I wouldn't dare breathe as we passed under the 'Bridge of Sighs.' I should feel afraid some old fellow from the 'Council of Three' might come to life and pounce out and seize me." The foolish child clung to Jack's arm at the mere fancy. Jack had to stop and kiss her, although he was smiling at her childish fear.

"What an imaginative little creature you are. I shan't take you within the portals of the Capuchin Convent in Rome," he said, laughing.

"Why not?" in a scared whisper. "I think I have read something about it—is that—oh, Jack, is that the convent where the vault underneath is walled with the bones of dead monks?"

Jack nodded.

"We won't go there, sweetheart," he said, reassuringly, "but we'll visit the other attractions in Rome some day, and it must be soon, I think."

"Yes, in three years perhaps," demurely.

"In less than half a year," returned Jack, in his positive way.

They paused at the window again to speak to Mrs. Chester. The library beyond was brightly lit. Mr. Chester was absorbed in reading.

"Oh, papa!" called Daisy laughingly, "you'll be devoured by mosquitoes." Her father raised his eyes and smiled benignly at her, and Daisy had to run away from Jack and give him a hug and a kiss for that.

"Don't read, papa, the night is too lovely to be wasted in doors. Jack and I are enjoying it."

"I have no doubt of that," smiling fondly at his petted daughter, "but I want to finish my book, you know, so run away." And after ar-

ranging a lock of the iron-gray hair to her satisfaction and making him look "like a dear, old darling," Daisy fluttered back to her mother and Jack.

Now I won't say the two had not been plotting together in her absence. At all events, in her heart Mrs. Chester had suddenly resolved that Daisy must not go on that ride, but she said :

"Mr. Clinton, has Daisy told you she expects her cousins down next week ?"

"Yes, mama, I should think I had," observed Daisy, very quaintly. The tone expressed so much Jack bit his lip to hide a smile.

"She anticipates great pleasure from her ride," continued Mrs. Chester. Dead silence, tears sprang to Daisy's eyes, a great lump rose in her throat, "great pleasure ?" Another moment and she was sobbing piteously, and strangely enough there seemed nothing for her to hide her tear-stained little face against but Jack's arm.

"Hateful old ride ! I'm not going at all, mama," sobbed she, "it has made me cry twice to-day !"

And then, regardless of Mrs. Chester's presence, Jack gathered Daisy close in his arms and kissed her repeatedly. Mrs. Chester smiled half tenderly as she heard Daisy say as they resumed their walk :

"Jack, never, never let's quarrel again. We're not a bit like the people in that story. We're," naively, "we're a *great* deal nicer !"

And Jack's lingering smile at her did not contradict the statement.

THE END.

